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- Cover picture Jacob Epstein's "Dovbs", 1914-15, is reproduced from *British Art in the Twentieth Century* edited by Susan Compton (457pp. Munich: Prestel, distributed in the UK by Lund Humphries, £38.3 7913 07983), the catalogue to the current exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, which is reviewed on page 139.

# Observations of the octopus-mountain

Thom Gunn

MARIANNE MOORE  
*The Complete Prose*  
Edited by Patricia C. Willis  
724pp. Faber. £30.  
0571 147887

TAFFY MARTIN  
Marianne Moore: Subversive modernist  
151pp. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.  
\$16.95.  
0292 738196  
JOHN M. SLATIN  
*The Savage's Romance: The poetry of Marianne Moore*  
282pp. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press. \$24.50.  
0271 094258

It was obvious from the first that Marianne Moore's poetry had charm. What becomes steadily more apparent is that it has also the kind of scope and power that set it beside that of contemporaries like Stevens, Eliot and Pound.

Like them she wrote about poetry in her poetry, perhaps even more than they did. For where Stevens wrote about the imagination, Pound about the work in progress, Eliot about the struggle with language, she wrote about all three, and also about the nature of reading ("Literature is a phase of life", begins "Picking and Choosing"), about criticism (the critic as connoisseur, the critic as steamroller) and above all about the attitude of mind that makes composition possible. But she is famous too for the simultaneous gusto and exactness with which she presented the things of the world: animals, places, artefacts, people. Imagism was, for all her contemporaries, as A. Walton Litz has noted while speaking of Stevens, a stage of their apprenticeship, and it was for her too, though she never owned that it was, for she seems to have felt uneasy with the subject. Certainly for concision and vividness of imagery not even William

could approach her. In her poem "New York", choosing to speak of one aspect of that city - as the centre of the fur trade - she evokes the look of different kinds of fur with a sensory sharpness - to make the reader gasp. She shows us a Manhattan

started with topes of crime and peopled with foxes, the long guard-hairs waving two inches beyond the body of the pelt;

the ground dotted with deer-skins - white with white spots, "as satin needlework in a single colour may carry a varied pattern", and willing eagle's-down compacted by the wind; and picardels of beaver-skin; white ones alert with snow.

(Picardels were apparently small river-barges.) The compressed activity in the detail about the guard-hairs and in such words as "compacted" and "alert" has a kind of poignancy that takes them beyond simple accuracy and vividness. Her delight in the physical aspect is bounded by the awareness that the potency still apparent in the pelt should be sacrificed to the commercial demands of humans. It is delight, nevertheless - she pictures here a scene of great beauty and not a slaughterhouse. But she will not abandon herself to the details in themselves. Later in the same poem, speaking about ancient New York as an island of forested wilderness, she cautions that it is necessary to stay outside, "since to go in is to be lost"; that is, to lose your powers of discrimination. She ends by saying that what attracts her about New York, whether in past or present, "is not the plunder, / but 'accessibility to experience'".

To enter the wilderness of specifics is to encounter the great danger of Imagism, where the subject of any one Imagist poem is as important as that of any other: they are all important and somehow equivalent, the station of the Métro the same as the oread. She loves those specifics, but they are not enough in themselves. The poet may emerge with plunder, and here perhaps she thinks of the other great poet of Manhattan, Walt Whitman, for whom she apparently felt much distaste: what did somebody like him give us but plunder, she seems to ask, the indefatigable lists with which so many of his poems are crowded? No, for all her wide appreciation of the physical world of, say, New York, it is more than the specifics, the furs, the facts, the bustle in the street, the incident and variety of a huge city that attracts her, it is "accessibility to experience".

Probably her greatest admiration, and access, is for her, as for James, the great value, the proof of the consciousness that is fully alive, and finally worth more than the succession of experiences to which it is the doorway. She is not, then, like Whitman as he wanted to be, the poet of mass-acceptance (though he is more than that); she is the poet of the door which is opened discriminately. For all the gusto of her acceptances, she makes plenty of

rejections: she can be thoroughly unkind about the "pedantic literalist", about the young dilettanti who "write the sort of thing that would in their judgment interest a lady", or about the ugly elaboration of the giant pinecone with holes for the water to spurt from, carved and put up by the Romans as a fountain. Accessibility is a door that may be closed when necessary. Thus her gusto is sharply defined by the discriminations to be made. She does not exclude her vivid intelligence from access to her vivid imagery, and - certainly until the late 1930s - each ignites the other, to produce a poetry radiant yet complex, informal yet splendid.

Throughout her long career Marianne Moore also wrote occasional prose - in a



quantity that many of her later-born admirers have never dreamed of. It is here collected in *The Complete Prose*, a handsome yet formidable book of some seven hundred pages. It starts with short stories resurrected in all their responses to questionnaires, and other forms of opinionatedness from that old age in which Marianne Moore had become a media myth, rather like Grandma Moses, and in which oddity was an expected reflex. Between these extremes comes all the material of interest, divided by the editor, Patricia C. Willis, into the *Dial* years - the period in the 1920s in which she wrote far and edited the *Dial*, one of the

seminal literary magazines of the century - and the "Middle" and "Later" years. The kind of prose are various, and include, besides those already mentioned, film reviews, obituaries, idiosyncratic articles on everything from knives to baseball, editorials for the *Dial* on subjects of topical interest, single-paragraph reviews of books received by the *Dial*, and lectures to university audiences; but the greater part consists of reviews and essays dealing with recent literature.

It will surprise no reader of her poetry that the prose too is dotted with epigrams. At times she can be very funny, as when she says that in Charles Colton's poems we may find, "as Coleridge says, 'the milder muse' - even the mindless muse"; or, of new novels in 1926, "We have, and in most cases it amounts to not having them, novels about discontented youth, unadvantaged middle age, American materialism." However, what she does supremely well is to go straight to the heart of a writer's activity in a single sentence, or sometimes in a single word. Thus, she points to the feeling behind the poetry of William Carlos Williams as "considerate"; she speaks of Mina Loy's use of words as "sliced and cylindrical"; she calls *Esther Waters* "wolf-lean". Of Emily Dickinson, she says: "She understood the sudden experience of unvaluable leisure by which death is able to make one 'homeless at home'." It would be easy to compile pages of her memorable apophthegms, about H. D., Samuel Johnson, Whistler, Henry James, Gertrude Stein, etc, but I will add only this one, describing the contents of the *Cantos* as "arranged in the style of the grasshopper-wing for contrast, half the fold against the other half, the rarefied effect against a grayer one". This surely exemplifies one of her great talents, that of translating physical observation into intellectual observation, and vice versa. Her comment sums up both the technique of the *Cantos* and the purpose of that technique with an admirable accuracy and compression. It is sentences like this that make you recollect that for the grasshopper-wing exist side by side in all same part of her mind, and reference between the two of them is a matter of course.

After all this, it is disappointing to report that she is usually a brilliant critic only in short passages: her command over the whole essay is a different matter. If the 1934 essay on Williams shows her at her best, her most cogent and connected, then the 1931 essay on

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Cambridge University Press  
The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, England



Pound (not the one with the grasshopper, but another), which she chose to reprint in book form twice, is more characteristic of her mature critical writing – and of that writing, I suspect, as she wanted it to be. The structure here bears a not fortuitous resemblance to that of other poems, as Taffy Martin points out in her *Marianne Moore: Subversive modernist*, and Ms Martin goes on to suggest, with a good deal of plausibility, that in some of her reviews – of Stein, of Pound, of Cummings – she was moreover indulging in a kind of conceit by imitating the form of the work she is discussing, as it were “quoting” their style for her own purposes. The Pound essay, in any case, consists of a kind of scrap-book of favourite quotations interspersed by her own comments, with a minimum of connectives. (The connectives that are implied are associative, as in Pound’s poetry and some of her own.) The structure of the whole is hard to make out, and indeed the piece makes exhausting reading, as much for one familiar with the first thirty *Cantos* as for one new to them (it was written as a review, after all). She does not seem to have been unhappy about the rambling nature of much of her prose. Certainly I do not detect regret in her remark of 1951: “my observations cannot be regularized”.

I take an extreme example; there is much straightforward and practical reviewing elsewhere. The best of the book is in the essays written between about 1920 and 1937, after which the prose falls off in much the same way as the poetry does. There are still some good things to be found, notably an obituary of Wallace Stevens, but somehow in these later years the mind behind it all is less discerning and less lively. Perhaps it was unfortunate that she should have been accepted so completely into the literary establishment towards which she had at first been defiant. Now she melted into it altogether too easily, accepting standard judgments (about the most hackneyed lines of de la Mare, for instance), and in a magazine

Though there is an obvious continuity between her prose and her poetry, it does not follow that her prose is as much worth reading as her poetry. Sharp as her critical mind was at its best, this immense book does not constitute the same kind of discovery for me that thirty-five pages of criticism by Basil Bunting did a few years ago. Bunting had her perceptiveness, but he also chose to keep control over the form of the essay (his observations are “regularized”) and he says more, finally, about Pound and Eliot in a very few pages than Moore does in the course of her many articles and reviews to do with them. *The Complete Prose of Marianne Moore*, then, is not a book I would recommend to a reader to slog through systematically; rather it would make a good bedside book, where it might last you for years.

To speak so is to make, as we used to say, a limiting judgment, and grateful as I am for the appearance of this book, I shall be far more so for the publication of her complete poetry, which has not yet occurred. The volume in print called *The Complete Poems* (305pp, Faber, paperback, £3.95, 0 571 13306 1) is really a severe selection, in which Moore favoured the products of her old age and discriminated against the achievement of her youth by omitting such magnificent poems as “Roses Only”, “Dock Rats” and “Dark Earth”. The matter is complicated by the fact that the revised constantly, nervously, and at times ruthlessly, now for the better and now for the worse. I suppose that eventually there will be a variorum edition, but it will be unreadable: what I would like to see, and as soon as possible, is an omnibus edition of all her books of poetry, restoring not only the omissions but also all the revised versions of individual poems (for example, “Poetry” in all its five versions – or is it six?) Then we shall have, returned to circulation, some powerful poetry which is at present unavailable.

It is not always easy to put your finger on what constitutes its power. She called her first authorized collection *Observations* (possibly taking a hint from Eliot’s title *Prufrock and Other Observations*), and clearly the word is still an important one for her in 1951, meaning as it does both “perceptions” and “comments”. The comment, as I have already implied, in some manner derives from the perception, and

often amounts to an epigram, a *sententia*. Thus in the middle of the poem to the snail we read, “Contractility is a virtue / as modesty is a virtue”. But the derivation is not always so straightforward, for if she is on the one hand attracted to the condensed wisdom of the maxim she is also attracted to the “beautiful element of unreason”. Her poetry fascinates, but its plain sense is often harder to arrive at than those traditional-looking summings-up would seem to indicate, and we continue wondering about it, annotating, considering, memorizing, searching out its obscure corners, because it still fascinates even when it bewilders us. What looks like a *sententia* doesn’t usually clinch a poem as we expect it to – as it would have, for example, an Elizabethan poem. Most readers must have been struck by the fact that it is difficult to relate every detail clearly to every other, not only in a long and complex poem like “Marriage” but even in some of the early short poems. You feel that each word is properly there, but you can’t quite fit it all together. There is a slight, mysterious and unsettling discontinuity.

Both Taffy Martin and John M. Slatin react to such difficulties with pleasure. Their pleasure dissociates them from “New Critics” such as R. P. Blackmur and Morton Dauwen Zabel, between whom and themselves they wish to put as much distance as possible. About a fifth of Ms Martin’s book deals with Moore’s prose. She makes a large claim for the importance of her four-year editorship of the *Dial*: that by her actual arrangement of the contributions in the magazine and also by the variety in subject-matter of her monthly editorials she was trying to demonstrate by example the fragmentation of both America and modernism. I am not really convinced: in the arrangement of the items, Moore may have been simply trying to make lively contrasts, as many other editors do; and she surely wrote an editorial about whatever interested her in that particular month. After all, we know that her mind had a “discontinuity for fact” and that she had writing, connectedly and elegantly as befits an editor, about maps of New York, exhibitions of Dürer and of Soviet art, children’s books, Hardy’s death, the salutations of letters (does one start “Dear So-and-so” or not?) There are moments when the editorial manner reminds me a little of *Times* Fourth Leaders. Martin, however, sees Moore as making a statement, through her editing, that is a “prophetic post-modern definition of American modernism”. Maybe one of these days someone will claim Charles Lamb as a post-modernist too.

Martin overstates the degree of discontinuity in the poems as well. She starts from a genuine perception – that the poems don’t, all of them, add up neatly – but she does not know what to do with it, and her book consists of a number of fresh starts, leading away from it into remarks like this: “Moore’s poems achieve their identity and integrity by being deceptively elusive and unfathomable.” Achieve? Integrity? deceptively? unfathomable? While trying to exercise the utmost charity I cannot extract much meaning from such a sentence. One can love discontinuity too much; it seems.

Slatin’s book *The Savage’s Romance: The poetry of Marianne Moore* is to be taken more seriously. He does not like the idea of poetry as “autonomous”, and so endeavours to show in what ways Moore’s may be better understood with reference to other literature or to the details of her own life. His book, like its subject, is complicated, exasperating and often rewarding. Some of his discoveries and consequent interpretations are hard to accept, but some of them are admirably suggestive, as when for example he argues that the ending of Moore’s “Nocturne”, an assemblage of phrases quoted from different sources, “responds to another such assemblage; the ending of *The Waste Land* published a few months before. The contrast in syntax and effect between the two only adds to the value of the comparison.” Slatin’s considerable abilities as a scholar are matched by his critical gifts. When he chooses to stick to “the words on the page” he is as sound as any of the previous generation, as you can see from his stringent but fairly accurate reading of “What Are Years”. Stringent, for unlike Martin he distinguishes between better and worse in the poetry, and reveals a degree

of taste not always found among Moore’s critics.

The triumph of the book is a rich chapter about Moore’s second-longest poem, “An Octopus”. As any reader may determine, the poem is really about a mountain, an octopus of ice, and that mountain, though she calls it by other names, is actually Mount Rainier, which she visited with her brother in 1922. Further, as Patricia C. Willis has discovered, this is not mentioned in the poem, but Slatin concludes that for Moore the mountain is also an image of America as Paradise. He then goes on to treat the poem as at least partly allegorical, and relates it to many writers, not all of whom are mentioned in it, one of them being Henry James, who is. And in a splendid attempt at describing Moore’s procedure, he says:

Thus reading “An Octopus” is something like reading *The Golden Bowl*: just as James confines us within the limits of the prince’s awareness, or the princess’s, so Moore confines us within a perspective which is far too limited to comprehend the full significance of the scene it presents in such profuse detail. It is not until the very end of the poem – not until we have been “summarily removed” from it by “the avalanche”, in fact – that we realize that we have been in Paradise.

Such an argument (and I have greatly simplified it) is of practical help to a reader having trouble with a difficult poem, and thus it performs the main function of criticism: it helps us to read. Nevertheless “we” would not be able to come to such a realization as he describes unless we had first read this chapter. I cannot but wish that Slatin had gone further and speculated about what Moore can have been up to when she suppressed all mention of the meadow Paradise? Or has the critic made a poem more perfectly co-ordinated than the one the poet wrote?

I am not sure about the answers to these questions, but they trouble me a good deal. And I think they ought to trouble Slatin. Another case of biographical material used to his discussion of “The Fish”, one of the best-known poems. It is “a war poem”, he tells us, “most likely prompted by the assignment of

Moore’s brother, a Navy chaplain, to sea duty in the North Atlantic late in 1917”. Likelihood in Mr Slatin’s mind is then replaced by certainty: in “The Fish”, he asserts later, Moore “imagines ‘the tragedy of a torpedoed troopship with a gaping ‘claw’ in its ‘dead side’”. According to this astonishing reading, “‘bodies’ that I always assumed to be those of living sea-creatures, with which the ocean is packed, are really those of drowned troops; and in the last phrase of the poem – ‘the sea grows old in it’” – it refers to the torpedoed ship’s hold. I simply cannot accept this: Slatin has completely confused a poem’s possible source with the poem itself. There is indeed a mysterious intensity of vision to Moore’s view of the ocean and a violence of tone in the sea; she speaks of it in this poem, and Moore’s anxiety about her brother may well be the source of both intensity and violence, but it is not to say that for all these years we have been missing in the imagery a story about torpedoed troopships. Again, Slatin takes a risk obvious questions: about intention, for example, or about ways in which contemporary readers might have read the poem. His book is far better than Martin’s, but his critical poem separate from his scholarly powers like oil from water, and if she was too much in love with discontinuity, he is too easily satisfied with obscurity.

But whatever the failures in the working out of these two critical hooks, one can easily put their premisses, that Marianne Moore is not the orderly poet some have taken her to be, is a sign of her stature that she can so well absorb the shock of such a new emphasis. Of course her writing can be broken and ambiguous, we agree, turning from the straightforwardness of “Sojourn in the Whale” to “An Octopus”. But Blackmur and Zabel were therefore wrong in having discussed another “neatness of finish”. The emphasis made by Martin and Slatin does not replace the merely supplementary. If Marianne Moore was not soiling to any of them exclusively, she is too massive a property, like an octopus-mountain itself, which can never be entirely seen from one point of view.

## Under the influence?

Lachlan Mackinnon

**BRUCE BAWER**  
*The Middle Generation: The lives and poetry of Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell, John Berryman and Robert Lowell*  
216pp, Hamden, CT: Archon, \$25, 020802125

“Some critics also consider Theodore Roethko to be a member of this group”, Bruce Bawer tells us in the first footnote to his “Prologue”. “I do not. His poetry is very different, and so is his attitude toward poetry. This I hope will become clear in the course of my study.” As the subject is not picked up again, it does not. What does is the author’s obsession with personalities. Dealing with four men’s peculiarly agonized lives, Dr Bawer writes that “Schwartz and Lowell found shelter . . . in psychos; Berryman and Jarrell, in suicide. It is not easy to understand such devastating alienation.” A little more reading in clinical literature might have helped. For instance, Bawer is hard on Lowell as an antisemite; Berryman’s notes for the novel *Recovery* (1973) speak of his own “re-entment of Cal’s [Lowell’s] tiny Jewish blood”. The sheer complexity of Lowell’s feelings on the matter is ignored. Lowell identified with Hitler in the manic phase of his illness, whereas such identification is more common in the depressive part of the cycle.

Bawer’s harshness (all four were repressed homosexuals, he observes) extends to an insistence on Jarrell’s suicide, and Lowell’s inability to face up to it. Mary Jarrell’s edition of her husband’s *Letters* (1983) cites the view of the doctor who carried out the autopsy, that from the nature of Jarrell’s injuries there was “reasonable doubt about his being a suicide”. Bawer finds obsession where few others will. Lowell’s “Death and the Bride” is said to be about Berryman’s suicide. “In fact, Lowell’s story of Frank’s death” Bawer mentions

Berryman at no point whatsoever and is lost, self in Boston, not Minneapolis. “Sally, Home from Rapin” shows us that Lowell is “turned away from his former deep involvement with foreign cultures and foreign literatures”, an odd view given that the poem was written in 1957 and by 1960 Lowell had studied *Initiations*. A lucid truth is elevated to a general principle.

The overall thesis of this book is that the generation it treats shaped their careers as Eliot’s example uniquely in mind. This may be true of Schwartz, whom Bawer takes as paradigmatic, but it makes little sense when the three other poets. Bawer ignores Eliot’s *Memorial of Life Studies*, for instance, which would obviously have complicated his picture of influence by revolt. Bawer’s case for Schwartz’s revolt is made even more problematic by *Vaudeville for a Princess* (1983), because it is not true that “To Schwartz, the worshipper of the shrine of Eliot”, the use of vaudeville was “a supreme act of heresy”. What, one wonders, of *Sweeney Agonistes*, the enthusiastic 1923 essay on Marie Lloyd (who enacted “the soul of the people”), which elevates music-hall as an art form over vaudeville, that is, vaudeville over cabaret? Other influences are treated more sketchily. The Fugitive may as well never have lived, while the charge “Jarrell and the Influence of Auden” finds half-a-dozen Audenesque masterpieces in all the subjects’ early poetry, but ends by stating that these devices were only used when they could be put to the poets’ “Eliotic” purposes. Even politically, Dr Bawer is shaky. He sees Eugene McCarthy as the Middle Generation politician, an unrealistic idealist, but forgets that it was McCarthy’s triumph in the New Hampshire primary which finally persuaded Robert Kennedy that Lyndon Johnson must be vulnerable. This book should have been either more solid or more modest, but as it is, it is hollow and unhelpful, a positive disservice to its subjects.

## The great Soviet paradox

Adam B. Ulam

**SEWERYN BIALER**  
*The Soviet Paradox: External expansion; internal decline*  
396pp, Tauris, £16.50, 1850430306  
**MARTIN WALKER**  
*The Waking Giant: Soviet Union under Gorbachev*  
282pp, Michael Joseph, £14.95, 0718127196  
**RICHARD OWEN**  
*Crisis in the Kremlin: Soviet succession and the rise of Gorbachev*  
253pp, Gollancz, £12.95, 0575036354

The titles of these books convey, more or less explicitly, the assumption that the Soviet Union is undergoing a deep internal crisis and that it may be about to enter a new era. This theme, with appropriate variations, has been stressed by Mikhail Gorbachev himself; he, of course, eschews the term “crisis”, but ever since his elevation to the General Secretaryship he has been travelling the length and breadth of the country proclaiming the need of radical reforms and preaching the gospel of *perestroika* – renovation or reconstruction being the closest approximation of the Russian term. Gorbachev’s criticisms were reiterated, and some new proposals for reform outlined, in his speech of January 27, in which he reportedly called for secret ballots for all senior Party posts.

Yet what in fact is the nature of the crisis? The General Secretary and his Kremlin colleagues would certainly reject as a capitalist slander the notion that the fault lies with the system – that it is not only oppressive but incapable of meeting the requirements of the modern age. For Seweryn Bialer, the main trouble lies in the stagnation of the Soviet economy which in turn proceeds from the ossification and doctrinaire rigidity of the State and Party apparatus. In *The Soviet Paradox* he notes with

some irony: “For many decades the political superstructure has shaped and controlled the socio-economic base in the Soviet Union. Now the time has come for the base to take its revenge on the superstructure.” The other two authors approach the problem more directly: “The system Gorbachev now heads and through which he has to work, is by nature corrupt, undynamic and bureaucratic”, writes the journalist Richard Owen. And Martin Walker, also from a journalist’s perspective, endorses the Russian dissenters’ thesis that a reform of the system will prove unavailing unless the Soviet leaders can find the courage to make an honest accounting of the mistakes and crimes of the past. Gorbachev, he notes correctly in *The Waking Giant*, is ready to talk at length (but rather vaguely, let us add) about the country’s current problems. But up to now he has been remarkably reticent about what is also needed: “There were the truths to tell, of Khrushchev’s time, and of Stalin’s; and without the readiness to tell them, Gorbachev’s hopes of a brave new Soviet future will be built on so much spiritual sand.”

All of this odds up to a rather far-reaching indictment of the Soviet reality. Were he impelled to speak frankly, Gorbachev might argue that he is not Stalin, who could order the most drastic changes by a simple fiat, and that he has to avoid courting the fate of Khrushchev, whose excessive garrulity about the sins of the past finally persuaded his colleagues to dispense with his services. But Gorbachev would also, perhaps, echoing Churchill, say he has not become the General Secretary to preside over the liquidation of the Soviet empire and the ending of the Communist Party’s domination of Soviet society.

Owen’s *Crisis in the Kremlin*, which concentrates on the succession process itself, seeks to explain how a relatively young party official from the provinces managed to break into the ranks of the ruling gerontocracy of Brezhnev’s last years. For all his skill in Kremlinology, the author falters occasionally when it comes to the historical background of his story. Surely it is a gross oversimplification to say that the

Middle Ages Russia had known nothing but a version of Asian despotism qualified only during Nicholas II’s reign”. And it is quite unwarranted to assert that in 1966 the Politburo “regained its former position as the supreme decision making body”. In fact, the Politburo – or Presidium, as it was known between 1952 and 1966 – never lost that function, except on one occasion during Khrushchev’s reign when, outvoted by his fellow-oligarchs, the First Secretary overcame their plot with the help of the Central Committee.

*The Waking Giant* may be criticized for its title. Certainly at the time of Brezhnev’s death the Soviet Union was far from being a backward society, and, elderly as its masters might have been, they were quite alert when it came to seizing opportunities to expand their power and influence in the outside world, as well as to warding off any threat, no matter how remote, to the Party’s dominant role, and to their own rule over the Party. Walker is especially good in correcting and putting into perspective the recent allegations about the Soviet Union’s economic and technological stagnation. It is true that the last decade of Brezhnev’s rule saw a considerable slowdown in economic growth. Walker, however, attributes that slowdown – as does the present Soviet leadership – mainly to the economic planners’ neglect of the quality factor in production and to their (hitherto) scant concern for the needs of consumers in the civilian sector of the economy. The chapter entitled “The Technology Revolution” offers convincing proofs that, economically and technologically, the Soviet Union is indeed a giant, which, if it has occasionally dozed off during the last fifteen years, has certainly not been asleep.

For all the outeness of Martin Walker’s analysis of the internal dynamics of Soviet politics, his touch is less sure when it comes to foreign policy. Sometimes it is his carelessness with historical facts, as when he writes that “in 1914, the whole of Poland remained a province of the Tsarist Russian empire”. Elsewhere the author, while in general forthright in assessing

ing to indulge in questionable analogies, such as, “For every Afghanistan, there is a Vietnam”.

In contrast with the other two works, which are concerned specifically with Gorbachev’s succession and his efforts at *perestroika*, Professor Bialer’s book attempts a more comprehensive review of the Soviet Union’s past and present dilemmas and its future prospects. Much of it is devoted to an examination of the thesis suggested by the book’s subtitle: it is its internal weaknesses and vulnerabilities that drive the Kremlin to try to offset its relatively poor record at home by military and foreign achievements designed to impress both its friends and enemies. The deprivations of the people in their capacities as citizens and consumers are presumably compensated for by pride in their country’s growing world-wide power and influence. As Bialer puts it, “Soviet foreign policy and its successes abroad legitimize the leadership and the regime”.

Yet as Bialer examines various aspects of Soviet foreign policy it becomes clear that the costs and risks of an expansionist policy have grown increasingly burdensome to the Soviet State and troublesome to its rulers. Especially striking and informative is his discussion of what he calls the “Polish debacle” and of its sombre implications for the Soviet imperial position in East and Central Europe. And one of the most astute observations in his generally perceptive book is his statement that the current Sino-Soviet *détente* notwithstanding, “a pragmatic China represents an even greater threat to Soviet ambitions and security than the China of Mao”.

And so the greatest Soviet paradox may yet turn out to be different from the one Seweryn Bialer so ably illustrates, that is, the paradox in the relationship between the domestic and foreign dimensions of the Kremlin’s policies. But quite apart from that, the seemingly hugely successful foreign policies of the Soviet Union have entangled it in a number of dangerous overcommitments, which, if not now, may in the foreseeable future threaten the stability of

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# First tragedy, then farce

Peter Clarke

BEN PINLOTT (Editor)  
The Political Diary of Hugh Dalton, 1918-40,  
1945-60  
737pp. Cape. £40.  
0224 019120

By November 1954, Hugh Dalton had nearly forty years' experience behind him as a member of the Parliamentary Committee of the Labour Party. Opposed to its majority support for German rearmament, Dalton dredged up a precedent from 1936-7 for members of a divided shadow cabinet speaking and voting as they thought at a party meeting. Herbert Morrison, whose long-standing service alongside Dalton had developed into a deep-seated mutual aversion, thereupon confessed that he had tried to consult the relevant minutes, only to find that they had been destroyed in the Second World War. Dalton now had his opening, as he subsequently recorded: "I said I had a typescript, recounting the whole thing, in my hand, a bit of my next volume at Memoirs." He knew that when the first volume of his memoirs had been published the previous year, Morrison's dismay - "I didn't know the bugger kept a diary like that" - had been palpable. "How lucky," Dalton beamed at the shadow cabinet, "that, if there is no official record, I have kept an unofficial one."

How lucky it is for historians, unlike poor Morrison, is a point which Ben Pinlott's work has fully brought home. His biography of Dalton has rightly been acclaimed as a triumph of scholarship and personal insight. His edition of a substantial selection from Dalton's diaries is now complete, and with a self-effacing aplomb which is wholly admirable. The diary for the Second World War, when Dalton held senior office, has already appeared. It is now flanked by two further sections, covering the earlier and later phases of his career. To include both in one publication, with its obvious violence to continuity and a sudden leap midway through from May 1940 to July 1945. The massive scale of the wartime diary no doubt created a problem in dividing the work. If there is no wholly satisfactory solution, there is much to be said for that actually adopted, in that it allows the wartime and peacetime diaries to retain their distinctive characters.

This volume presents a juxtaposition of the problems facing the Labour Party in two very different phases of its history. As Dalton himself recognized, his own high tide and that of the party broadly coincided. Much the same could have been said of Attlee, Bevin, Morrison and Cripps - all of them born in the 1880s. "I was at my high point politically in 1940-41 and in 1945-46," Dalton recorded in 1951, "but that was largely determined by events outside me, though in these events I got and took my chance." He did not, however, lapse into supposing that the men of his own generation embodied a unique endowment of political virtue, nor into disparaging their likely successors. On the contrary, he continued to back youth even when no longer young himself and made it the mission of his own declining years to dislodge his remaining contemporaries. In 1955 he thought that the "Parliamentary Committee was stiff with old age pensioners", and used the announcement of his own decision to leave it to embarrass others into following suit. He called it "Operation Avalanche", already with an eye to a chapter heading in the next volume of his memoirs, and though it went "damned well" in achieving a significant reduction in the age of the Labour front bench.

Dalton, in fact, was prepared to argue the case for cyclical renewal from his own experience in the 1930s, "when the old top end of the party was blown off by MacDonald's treachery and Henderson's death", and the task of policy-making had been taken up by Attlee and Cripps in the Commons and by Morrison and Dalton on the National Executive Committee. "We've done all that now," Dalton told Attlee in 1951; "written the first chapter of the Socialist story, in law and administration. What next? The younger people must write the second chapter."

It is the first chapter, then, which comprises

the bulk of this volume. Dalton claimed to have become a socialist at the end of the First World War, in which he served in Italy. After the Armistice, the Labour Party seemed a promising instrument for a politically ambitious radical with a loud voice and an unpercrust confidence bred into him at Eton and King's College, Cambridge. "What is chiefly needed is (1) improved organisation in the constituencies, (2) an influx of brains and middle-class non-crank membership." Dalton was determinedly unsentimental in his view of party politics. The contrast between his patient approach and the impetuous self-dramatization of Oswald Mosley, another class traitor who joined Labour, was not simply a matter of different natural abilities. When Mosley provoked a confrontation with the Labour leadership over unemployment in 1930, Dalton maintained that he possessed "no sense of the slow transitions of real life. Having joined the Party last week, he wants to lead it tomorrow afternoon."

Mosley's case, of course, was that the Labour party in office was no more prepared to tackle the problem of unemployment than the



Dalton, as a young man, in 1918. The photograph is taken from Ben Pinlott's *Hugh Dalton* (732pp. Cape. £25. 0224 021001).

Tories had been. Philip Snowden stood immobile in defence of Treasury orthodoxy. Dalton, as a junior minister under Henderson at the Foreign Office, was not in the front line in this dispute. He might have been expected, as an academic economist trained in Cambridge, to have championed Keynesian alternatives. But he remained professionally unpersuaded by Keynes, preferring instead the analysis of old colleagues at the London School of Economics, and politically suspicious of "Lord Oswald", trusting instead the judgment of "Uncle Arthur". Thus when Mosley hinted at resignation in January 1930, Dalton could "express sympathy with him in being confronted with such a combination of stupidity and cowardice", without enlisting under this banner of revolt. Mosley's appeals to the party in the following months are reported as displays of headstrong vanity. And when "this hateful fellow, whom I have always bitterly distrusted", eventually leaves the Labour party: "The air seems cleaner already." The irony was that, within a year, MacDonald and Snowden were themselves to defect, leading a National Government which appealed for a Doctor's Mandate.

Dalton was truly a Fabian in forswearing the frontal assault for tactics of permeation. His constant watchword was never to resign, his persistent aim to instill his party with common sense and realism. He maintained that "Socialism did best when it marched in step with the rules of arithmetic", and his efforts in the field of economic policy in the 1930s conformed to this maxim. In this period, however, it was foreign policy which increasingly consumed his attention. He was to the fore in bringing Labour slowly round to the acceptance of rearmament against Hitler, a cause for which he had temperamental affinity. Other Labour politicians felt just as strong an intellectual and moral revulsion from fascism, but none matched Dalton in simply hating Germany.

Here Dalton's post-war diary is a case study in the transition from history to politics. The first time as tragedy, the second time as farce. If Dalton's post-war diary is the pre-war

scourge of appeasement, he also looks silly as the post-war hammer of the Huns. "The German problem is very simple," lie remarks in 1946, "the problem is that there are too many Germans." Hence his rooted opposition to German rearmament in the early 1950s, when virtually his only supporters were Bevanites, with whom he was otherwise often at odds. Conversely, Dalton found difficulty in communicating his feelings to his young friends on the Right of the party, like Anthony Crosland, Roy Jenkins and Douglas Jay. "I told them Germans were murderers, individuals excepted," Dalton recorded in 1952. "They'd killed all my friends in the First War, etc." Yet his vision of the German economy forging ahead did not entirely lack precedence, nor his foreboding that "we, in our mismanaged, mixed-economy, overpopulated little island, shall become a second-rate power, with no influence and continuing 'crises'".

Dalton's period as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1945 had begun on a high note, as, with the American Loan protecting the external position, he promised to find the money for internal reforms "with a song in my heart". It ended in anti-climax, with the Loan drained away and Dalton leaving office over a Budget Leak in November 1947. The fact was that Dalton had lost the will to go on shouldering the sort of heavy ministerial burden he had carried since 1940. He reflected that "one can't go on living for ever like this on pills and poisons". It was not just honour which led him to tender his resignation with an alacrity that shames more recent cabinet ministers. The diary, moreover, brings out the physical debility of a whole group of leading ministers who were now well into their sixties. What Attlee's Government needed was a Patients' Mandate. The ailing Bevin had long been accompanied by his own doctor, Morrison was unfit in 1948, Cripps went off to a Swiss sanatorium for a critical period in 1949. When Attlee entered hospital in 1951, even his teeth gave trouble. ("His former dentist was too old.")

led to the resignation from the Government of Aneurin Bevan, Harold Wilson and John Freeman, has interesting echoes from the diary of 1930, as the editor points out. Thus Dalton's foghorn whisper on Bevan's performance at a party meeting: "This is Mosley speaking!" But Dalton was by no means alone in his propensity to view the new crisis through twenty-year-old spectacles. Bevan himself had accused Hugh Gaitskell of "trying to be a second Snowden", and it was the "wicked Tribune attacking Hugh most outrageously, comparing him to Snowden, and his Budget to Snowden's in 1931"

## All in a good cause

Phyllis Willmott

C. H. ROLPH  
Further Particulars: Consequences of an Edwardian boyhood  
321pp. Oxford University Press, £12.50.  
0192117904

In *Further Particulars* C. H. Rolph picks up the thread from his earlier book, *London Particulars*, and continues the story of his life from about the end of the First World War to the present day. For the most part, these are the reminiscences of the public life of a forthright, rational and self-contained man. Only in a final chapter the author - now aged eighty-five - offers "some kind of statement of essential beliefs" which, for him, seems to be a verdict of "not yet proven", and also for him a rare excursion into the more personal.

After a few years as a clerical worker in the City of London, Rolph followed his father into the City of London Police, where he remained for twenty-five years, a time during which he also developed his gifts as writer. In 1946 he retired (with the rank of Chief Inspector) to join the editorial staff of the *New Statesman*; it was there that he made his reputation as a journalist and broadcaster. The combination of what he calls his "writing obsession" and his experience in the police committed him to becoming a supporter of various causes "for the promotion of this and the abolition of the other".

which stung Dalton most deeply. Maybe he identified "Mosley speaking" a few days later because he had been perusing his old diaries, as Pinlott suggests; but Clunter Ede, who chaired that meeting, impudently came out with the same comparison in winding up - without, so far as we know, any false diaries to prompt him. The main issue between the two sides in 1951 seems to have been whether it was a replay of 1931, with Gaitskell as Snowden. Only a party with such a rich mythology of betrayal would have been spoilt for choice in this way.

One further aspect which stands out is the contrast between the anticipated and actual electoral impact of these events. Dalton gloomily brooded on how the party might split "and how our young men would be mowed down". On Budget Day the prospect was "an early election and a heavy defeat". He knew that John Freeman, trying with resignation, expected to lose Watford. Five under-secretaries, headed by Jim Callaghan, similarly feared losing their seats and appealing for only accordingly. Dalton thought "it had taken me a long time to see that he'd mass-murdered the Party, if we went, including nearly all his own friends . . .". Yet, in the end, when Bevin duly went and the election duly came, the slaughter was largely averted. The five under-secretaries lived to fight another day and Freeman held on at Watford. Labour in fact polled its record vote in 1951 and under a fair electoral system would have been returned to office.

But that, as Dalton makes clear, would have been too much of a good thing. "We are all," he had written in 1951, "stale and uninspired and unimpressive." Indeed, Dalton was admitting by 1954 that, "People were content with the Tories. They had stolen the Socialist clothes I full employment, welfare state, etc." In some moods he could "see no reason, except conservatism, for voting Labour now". Yet it would be a half-truth to suggest that Dalton ended up simply ranting consistently, as he occasionally did, against his old party. This was also the time he was planning Operation Avalanche to rejuvenate it. When he dreamt of a "Young Turk landing on the beaches of Power and Fame" in years to come, he envisaged his young companions Jim Callaghan, "Tory Crusader" and Denis Healey "in the van". Would he have greeted the Labour Cabinet of 1976 with a song in his heart? After Operation Avalanche, when Gaitskell became leader of a much younger team, Dalton trumpeted to himself: "I feel a little like a Creator who rested and beheld his handiwork after much hard labour and saw that it was good."

- but he was never, as he emphasizes, an on-the-street banner-waving activist.

Among the most interesting chapters of *Further Particulars* are those on the relations issues that Rolph tackled - mainly in his journalism and broadcasting but also in committee and other promotional activities. In his easily accessible prose he excels at bringing life to complicated issues that many of us feel we ought to be more concerned over and know more about. He explains how Juries work - and how they could work better; what has gone wrong with the system of parole; the continuing scandal over the care of some of the mentally ill; the problems of prisons and prison reform. On all of these issues Rolph has campaigned; and in writing about them he has over many years continued to attract and retain a great deal of public interest and support.

But *Further Particulars* is not only about such serious matters. It contains evocative descriptions and stories of what at the City of London was like in the early 1920s when, for example, sleep were still being driven through the streets to Smithfield market. Observations on the habits and eccentricities of colleagues are help to recapture the past. Other chapters offer some fleeting vignettes of meetings with the famous. If this is an indulgence that Rolph himself seems a little embarrassed about, it is a small part of the admirably professional bag of tricks with which he succeeds in his aim of entertaining, as well as informing, his readers.

## A problem ignored

Colin McGinn

PATRICIA SMITH CHURCHLAND  
Neurophilosophy: Toward a unified science of the mind/brain  
546pp. MIT Press. £27.50.  
0262 031167

Contemporary cognitive science - that recent and fertile confluence of philosophy, psychology and computer science - is apt to represent the human mind (or its underlying mechanism) as a proposition-manipulating engine, a device for processing language-like symbols. Thus, philosophy of mind investigates the so-called propositional attitudes (belief, desire, intention, etc.), those central pillars of commonsense or "folk" psychology; scientific psychology tries to uncover the mechanisms and algorithms whereby the mind constructs its representations of the world, these processes being seen as symbolic computations; and the builders of computer models of mental accomplishments program their machines with appropriate languages in which the machine takes instruction. On this view, the mind is conceived as a kind of word-processor.

But if you examine the brain - its neural nuts and bolts, its electro-chemical transactions, its biological architecture - you do not observe the operations of the propositional engine: nothing sentential appears to lurk in its fissures and nuclei. Higher brains (like ours) seem to resemble lower brains (like reptiles) in this respect; and these lower brains look plainly intra-linguistic. One reaction to this invisibility of the informational is to suppose that we are looking from the wrong level: we have mistakenly allowed the eye of theory to be fixated on the brain's hardware; indeed, we shouldn't really be looking at all. What needs to be recognized is that the brain can be described at different levels of abstraction; and at the more abstract level of propositional machinery comes into theoretical focus. It is the existence of this more abstract level - the "software" level - that secures the autonomy for the sciences of mind with respect to neurobiology. This is, roughly, the Standard View.

But there is another, more radical view, namely Eliminative Materialism, which urges that invisibility in the hardware is a sign of outright non-existence. We strain our eyes seeking for the brain's propositions only because we are shackled by obsolete pre-scientific conceptions of what the mind is. Folk psychology, a theory of the mind developed before people knew what science was all about, has created theoretical fictions which we are tempted to hypostatize into scientifically real structures and processes. A long hard look at the biological brain should serve to dislodge us of our ancient folk-psychological superstitions, and open the way for a genuine science of what goes on in our heads. This is, roughly, the view held by Patricia Smith Churchland (and others of her persuasion). Their motto might be crudely put: if you can't find it in neuroscience, it's because it isn't there.

*Neurophilosophy* is a 500-page dithyramb to the brain sciences. Churchland's mission is to convince philosophers and psychologists that detailed knowledge of the biological workings of the nervous system is the answer to their

problems. Instead of theoretical autonomy, they should seek integration, reduction - or, failing that, elimination. Psychology, philosophical or scientific, should thus be prosecuted as a branch of neurobiology. She conducts her crusade with impressive zeal: tremendous energy has gone into the campaign, and there is something awesome about her conviction. But the excesses of evangelism obtrude disturbingly: mesmeristic repetitiveness, hectoring the audience, rhetoric masquerading as argument, blindness (or blind-sightedness!) to the opposite point of view. Of this sales-resistant reader, at least, she has not made a convert to the faith. The sparkling new discipline of "neurophilosophy" does not live up to its advertising. It fails to vanquish the competition from more traditional approaches.

The book has three parts. Part One, the lengthiest, offers a fairly potted survey of the history and current state of neurophysiology. We learn about the behaviour of individual neurons, about the functional architecture of grosser structures, about the various techniques that have been developed to figure out what is going on deep inside the brain. Naturally, this is all fascinating stuff - especially, perhaps, the impressive progress that has been made in understanding the precise nature of the nerve impulse. As far as I can judge, Churchland does a competent job of presenting this material - though I suspect that many philosophical readers will find the details a bit too technical for their taste. One wonders, however, quite what the point of reproducing this material is, since it can be readily found in standard textbooks of neurophysiology. And there is no real attempt to locate the scientific facts in a philosophical context. It serves to demonstrate Churchland's credentials as a philosopher of neuro-science who has done her homework, but that is hardly a sufficient rationale. No significant gap in the literature seems to be filled by these 235 pages. The dominant impression they leave is how far away from the nature of the mind detailed knowledge of the brain's physiology leaves us. Knowing little about the brain, we are inclined

to think it is the brain that is doing the thinking, the feeling, the freedom, etc.; but once we start to understand its nature as a physical-biological object, we realize that there is nothing supernatural in there, and then it becomes even harder to see how the brain could subserve the mind. Understanding the precise chemistry of neural transmission makes it seem even more baffling how a few pounds of soggy biological tissue could be the basis of a conscious mental life.

Part Two broaches some relevant philosophy concerning theory-reduction in general and reductionism about psychology in particular. Churchland's exposition of inter-theoretic reduction is clear and workmanlike, though pretty standard. She gets more interesting when advocating her version of eliminative materialism. Suppose psychology (folk or scientific) failed to be reducible to neurobiology: what would that show about psychology? There are two main options: psychology is a respectable autonomous discipline with its own well-defined subject-matter; or, the principles and taxonomy of psychology as we have it are bogus and deserve to be unceremoniously eliminated from science and ordinary thinking.

## August in the Offices

The small divorces of the summer offices relieve the year, let in the air.

Absentees sun themselves by succulent hedgerows, or sit in rainsoaked reveries on river banks -

but their desks gather accretions; the omelette on their doors have a distant, commemorative look.

Territories suffer encroachment, feuds and flirtations lose their fine balance; but in September -

the omelette shoes flung to the back of the cupboard - flocks of fresh memos gather for the winter.

CONNIE BENSLEY

The second view takes propositional psychology to be a falsifiable empirical theory whose prospects are not bright: it might well turn out, for example, that there are no such things as beliefs and desires, or indeed pains and emotions, since these common-sense psychological categories do not map neatly on to neurobiological categories.

I do not think that Churchland provides any good reason to suppose that this elimination is likely to happen, and the prospect is virtually inconceivable. You might as well say that physics is likely to show that there are no objects in space which causally interact with each other. When Descartes asserted that he could not be wrong in supposing himself to be a thinking being he was not being misled by his ignorance of neuroscience. Tell him all the neuroscience there is to know, and he will not be justified in concluding "Oh, so I'm not really thinking, after all." At any rate, it is this kind of intuitive conviction that Churchland needs to undermine - and no amount of tired rhetoric about the intellectual conservatism of philosophers is going to turn the trick. Of course, ordinary folk may well harbour some pretty funny ideas about how their minds work, ideas that deserve prompt elimination; but it is another matter to claim that the general scheme of psychological understanding which we employ every day might, as a realistic possibility, turn out to be simply false.

What would we lose if we junked the resources of folk psychology? Well, without the ascription of mental states with propositional content, we would lose the idea of ourselves as rational (or irrational) beings: for the normative notions of correct and incorrect reasoning require that logical relations hold between mental states. In consequence, logic itself would be deprived of its *raison d'être*, since logic is the means by which people's propositional reasoning gets evaluated: if there is no

such thing as propositional reasoning, logic loses its point and purpose. Nor is it clear that anything recognizable as art could survive the repudiation of the categories of folk psychology: for how, without these categories, could we characterize the artist's intention? Certainly the major (and minor) works of literature would not have existed had their authors been persuaded of the truth of eliminative materialism. How, too, are we to apportion blame and responsibility without the notions of motive and intention? And what would ordinary human relationships be like if we could only talk brain physiology? It sounds like a very dystopian prospect indeed. (This is not to say that scientific psychology must slavishly follow the contours of folk psychology; it is only to insist upon the value and utility of the latter as an autonomous mode of person understanding.)

Churchland is on much firmer ground in Part Three, unfortunately much the shortest section of the book. Here she expounds a theory of sensorimotor co-ordination developed by Pelionisz and Llinás known as "tensor network theory". The basic idea is that perception and action might be co-ordinated in the brain by means of metrically deformed mapping relations between banks of neurons. This theory is philosophically interesting because it characterizes the underlying neural machinery in non-sentential terms. It is presented in some detail, but Churchland does little to put it into theoretical context and derive appropriate general conclusions. She does not see that it is compatible with propositional psychology, even when generalized to higher cognitive processes, as a glance at the relevant philosophical literature would have made clear (we just need the idea of propositions indexing underlying nonpropositional structures). Neither does she relate the tensor network theory to other theories in psychology of the same general shape - notably

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mental model theory and the analogic theory of mental imagery. These are areas in which the synoptic vision of a philosopher might have been expected, but Churchland's vision is too tunnelled on to the details of the neurophysiology to supply this kind of perspective.

A disturbingly anti-philosophical vein runs throughout the book, beginning with its very first sentence: "In the mid-seventies I discovered that my patience with most mainstream philosophy had run out". It would be widely agreed, I think, that the period in question was an exceptionally rich one philosophically: Davidson, Kripke and Putnam, to choose just three philosophers, were doing important work around that time, much of it centring on the mind-body problem. Churchland, however, was impatient with it. It emerges later that she is impatient with philosophical method in general — she sees nothing coherent or valuable

in the kind of conceptual investigation typically undertaken by philosophers, past and present. (The present reviewer is mockingly berated for believing that it is possible to do interesting philosophy of mind in this traditional way.) She thus consigns most of the best work in philosophy of mind this century (and earlier) to the rubbish-heap. No remotely convincing justification is given for this hubristic dismissiveness, and one can only assume that she has succumbed to a severe case of scientism. Churchland is, of course, quite within her rights to find science more interesting than philosophy — in which case she should have become a scientist. But it seems to me deplorable to convert this personal preference into a wholesale condemnation of philosophy as a serious subject. There is really no need to downgrade philosophy in order to proclaim the importance of neuroscience. In fact, I think her

attitude to philosophy in this book is simply absurd.

It might have been different if she had succeeded in showing how some standard philosophical problems could be solved by means of neuroscience; but nothing of the kind is shown in the course of this very long book. So far, then, "neurophilosophy" is the name of a non-existent subject, at least if it is intended to offer a new approach to the old problems of philosophy. As it stands, it amounts rather to a proposal to ignore most of the problems that have occupied philosophers. Like the old discredited positivists, Churchland will have none but empirical questions; but unlike them, she has no colourable philosophical motivation for this parochial view. It is certainly no defence of her neuroscientism to cite Quine as having "shown" that there is no analytic-synthetic distinction. Nor does it cut any ice to go on as if

traditional philosophers are constitutionally "anti-scientific". It really shouldn't need saying that both philosophy and science are perfectly respectable enterprises, each in their own distinctive way: but apparently it does.

This book is clearly intended to appeal both to philosophers and to neuroscientists (as well as to psychologists), but there is a real question whether it is necessary at all. The great bulk of the material covered is readily available in standard works of neurophysiology and philosophy; putting it between the same pair of covers seems not to be a very great advantage. And Churchland's own contribution to the issues could have been condensed into a much shorter book. As it is, the book contrives to be both long and superficial. There are, to be sure, some worthwhile ideas in it, but they are swamped by irrelevant technical detail and by the fervid excesses of the proselytizer.

## Thinking of unthought-of things

Martin Hollis

GILBERT HARMAN  
Change in view: Principles of reasoning  
147pp. MIT Press. £19.95.  
026201555

The best chess move in practice need not be the one which God would play against God. Human players may fare better with moves which are easier to find or which exploit the blind spots of a particular opponent. A manual of ideal chess would be different from one on how to win in practice. Similarly a book on the principles of logic might be quite unlike one on how we reason or even on how we can reason better. The thought has implications for, among other things, the development of artificial intelligence.

Gilbert Harman argues stoutly that "there is no clearly significant way in which logic is epistemic: it is false if anything it implies is false, and inconsistency is always a vice, always needing removal. But, he contends, there is no corresponding lesson for reasoning. One does not clutter one's head by swelling one's current beliefs with whatever they imply. One does not waste effort in ferreting out inconsistencies but waits for them to obtrude. One lives with an inconsistency, once noticed, until clear what to drop. Whereas traditional epistemology wants us to hold only those beliefs which we can justify, Harman regards beliefs as innocent and tenable until proved guilty. When changing our views, because we must, we do and should change them minimally." In the words of the blurb, "Reasoned revision — unlike theorem-proving — is a nonlinear, nonmonotonic matter of making piecemeal adjustments in response to new knowledge and situations."

This spirited message is intriguing for many areas of thought. For instance, it suggests teaching students a pragmatic philosophy of science rather than formal logic. It makes the

theory of knowledge a study of the social practice called "knowledge", rather than an attempt at an ideally organized system of truths. It would have us model artificial intelligence on actual human intelligence, rather than on some rarefied abstraction. It supports Herbert Simon's "satisficing" models of economic behaviour, based on the real-life workings of firms and individuals, against the rational-man, ideal-case models of orthodox micro-economic theory.

But I pick the word "intriguing" with care. Neither the broad theme nor these possible implications come through unmediated from Harman's lively and clever but scrappy discussion. As he ends by saying himself, "None of this pretends to be the last word on the subject. My aim has not been to settle issues but to raise issues. My aim has been to show that there is a subject here, change in view, a subject worthy of serious systematic study." He certainly succeeds in showing that, if we ask how people do their views, we do not find them rational exactly after the manner of "best play" formal systems. It is certainly interesting to ask what principles are in fact followed. But there is a snag to the enquiry, which, because Harman is too clever to miss it, muddies his conclusions.

## Responding to the new

H. M. Robinson

EDO PIĆEVIĆ  
The Concept of Reality  
256pp. Duckworth. £19.95.  
0715620754

The overall thesis of this book is most clearly stated at the beginning of the final chapter. Edo Pićević claims here that the world cannot be construed to a simple, realistic way, for "the world that [a theory of reality] is designed to fit is not a naturalistic machine 'out there', but a self-referential system that 'talks about itself' . . . . There is no reality independently of such an epistemic activity." The "machine out there" fallacy can be avoided by approaching the world "structurally" rather than "ontologically".

Pićević explains this by contrasting three perspectives on reality. First, there is the "ontological-metaphysical" one, which interprets reality in terms of certain basic items (atoms or events, etc); second, the Kantian critical approach, which "attempts to pin down the conditions of intelligibility of existence claims"; third, the sociological approach which rests ontology on "inter-subjective validity". Though there is something true in each, they are all ultimately inadequate; the correct approach comes from seeing how our basic concepts are structural in a way that binds together all three approaches. The result is Hegelian, though without any implication that the "self-displaying" structure is an agent or mind.

The objective of the book is intriguing, but there are difficulties. The purpose and argumentation of the last three chapters are much weaker than those of the preceding two, where the argument is often difficult to follow,

It lies in the elusive relation between descriptive and normative standpoints. "It is hard to come up with convincing normative principles except by considering how people actually do reason", he remarks; "on the other hand it seems that any descriptive theory must involve a certain amount of idealization and idealization is always normative to some extent". Descriptions are not unvarnished news but have theoretical and normative presumptions, which affect what one claims is going on. A Kantian would add that the presumptions are bound to include some of the ideal-case principles, which Harman sets out to question — not implausibly, given that he relies throughout on a robust notion of objectively good reasons for belief. But, in any case, Harman is trying to describe rational practices, while recognizing that "rational" is an evaluative term, so to talk about rational action is to talk about some sort of ideal case. The results cannot fail to be ambiguous.

him, I was less impressed by some off-hand linguistic philosophy which goes into the description of our habits of thought. For instance, does it matter what we would or would not be inclined to say about the intentions of a sniper who fires chancily at extreme range? The book

both as to its content and its place in the overall scheme. All those twelve chapters really show is that certain concepts — such as entity, existence, truth and evidence — are not wholly logically independent of each other. It is not clear that anyone need deny that. So the real argument begins with the attempted refutation of metaphysical realism in Chapter Thirteen.

Although Pićević does not say so, the argument of this chapter is a more sophisticated version of Berkeley's "master argument" that there cannot be any unthought-of objects because as soon as one forms that conception they become objects of thought. Pićević's argument, somewhat simplified, is as follows. The first step is to try to show that there is a referential use of "all" which is not captured by any quantified expression. This occurs when "all Fs" means "all actual Fs", not "any F, if there is one". This Pićević combines with the metaphysical realist's assertion that there are objects wholly independent of mind or thought (that is, "without being thought or talked about in any manner whatsoever"); and the principle that if anything is F then all F-things are F-like; so if anything is F then all F-things are thought then all wholly-independent-of-thought things are wholly-independent-of-thought-like. By some simple logical steps this has the metaphysical realist asserting both that there is something that exists wholly without being thought about and that that thing is wholly-independent-of-thought-like. As the latter constitutes something thought about, then the metaphysical realist is involved in a contradiction. In brief, the argument is that it is self-refuting to assert that there are wholly unthought-of things because one must agree that all actual wholly unthought-of things possess the property of being wholly unthought-of, and, given that "all actual" is referential, but is there

is on better ground when arguing normatively for accepting what one has no positive reason to doubt, for revising beliefs minimally and only when we must, and for the other pragmatic principles of reasoning mentioned earlier. But here I was left wondering about the political implications. Harman's (somewhat casual) principles of clutter avoidance, minimal revision and of extending beliefs only when one has an interest in doing so are just what a closed society like *Brave New World* needs for stopping people asking fundamental questions. Perhaps freedom demands a radical Cartesian overhaul of beliefs from time to time.

In all, this is an immensely sharp-witted book and I enjoyed the acuity of its passages, even when they did not add up to much. For instance, the treatment of the Lottery Paradox (each ticket is so unlikely to win that I could be held to know that it won't win; yet I know that some ticket will win) and of the difference between intended and merely foreseen consequences, is a pleasure. Also it comes at a time when interest in informal reasoning, descriptive epistemology, computer simulation, satisficing models and organizational decision procedures is heading in the direction of Harman's gestures. It is not the last word, but it has hit on a topic worthy of serious study.

by thinking something of them.

It is fairly obvious that the sense of "think of" involved in this argument is not the one that the realist is using when he claims that some objects are unthought-of. Pićević considers the very plausible objection that the required sense means "not thought of individually". In replying to this he seems to make an error of scope. Taking the metaphysical realist to be called "Jones" and using "Ind" to mean "Wholly mind-independent", he says "Let us begin by postulating a particular Ind-thing *a*. Then, on the present interpretation, Jones, by merely asserting the existence of Ind-things, is not saying anything about *a*, not even that it is Ind-like." Putting his symbolism into words, he then expresses this as "Jones asserts that [there is something Ind and if *a* is Ind then it is not the case that Jones asserts that *a* is Ind]". But reference to *a* should not occur within the scope of what Jones asserts, for he at no time forms any thought of *a*, only that there is something Ind.

The other response to the argument is that the metaphysical realist only asserts that things are *possibly* unthought-of, not that they actually are. He then says that this is true "only provided the proposition 'This chair is never thought of or spoken of by anyone in any manner whatsoever' expresses a possible state of affairs". But it is easy to see that the latter proposition cannot be asserted without being falsified by being asserted. But it is for from being a pragmatic contradiction, and to say so seems to confuse "It is possible that this chair might actually be unthought of", which is a pragmatic contradiction, and "It is possible that this chair might have been unthought of", which is not.

Although there are many interesting discussions in this book, the main — and very ambitious — argument seems to me to fail.

## The spirit in the mass

Frances Spalding

RICHARD CORK  
David Bomberg  
344pp. Yale University Press. £55.  
0300038275

The move to rehabilitate David Bomberg as a major artist and influential teacher began soon after his death in 1957. Exhibitions and a monograph by William Lipke had by 1967 repaired a state of gross neglect, recovering Bomberg's originality and brilliance as a Vorticist as well as the vigorous expressiveness that characterized his style after the mid 1920s. But it was the growing reputation of two of his pupils, Frank Auerbach and Leon Kossoff, that drew attention, not only to his ideas and methods, but also to his centrality within a tradition that regards drawing as the crux of art. Bomberg recognized that his teaching played a crucial role and said of his pupils: "The young will provide me with recognition." It is, however, this magisterial book that finally crowns his reputation.

In his lifetime Bomberg enjoyed scant acclaim. The late 1930s were a particularly difficult period. In 1936, after a visit to Spain

couragement he received, went through spells of inactivity and experienced spiritual desolation. He did not invite half-measures; stood apart from artists' groups; and rooted his belief in the individual as an irresistible force, capable, in his or her integrity of vision, of confounding all tyrannies.

Cork deals eloquently with this passionate misfit. As in his previous books, he is admirably tenacious in his pursuit of Bomberg's thought, as it develops from the initial sketch, through drawings and preliminary studies, into the final painting. In its scholarship and argument, this book evinces mature excellence, leaving one minor caveat, that the author's thoroughness is sometimes dulled by too even a pace. He has previously covered Bomberg's early masterpieces in his two-volume study, *Vorticism and Abstract Art in the First Machine Age*, and it is interesting to see how much more resonant his analyses now become as a result of his greater familiarity with Bomberg's family origins and the circumstances of his youth. The near-abstract "Mud Bath", with its hard-hitting energy, here signifies Bomberg's experience of the hectic conditions and clash of interests in a crowded East End ghetto. "In the Hold", in which refugees emerging from a boat are almost obliterated by the superimposition



Bomberg's "Dinora", 1937, is reproduced from Richard Cork's David Bomberg which is reviewed here.

which inspired some of his best work, he held an exhibition of paintings at the Cooling Galleries and not one sold. The following year his work was rejected by the Tate. When war broke out he was turned down several times by the War Artists Advisory Committee before being granted a commission that was terminated after only initial sketches had been made. It is also estimated that between 1939 and 1944 he applied, unsuccessfully, for over 300 teaching posts. Checks and disappointments like these left him alienated, ill at ease in Britain, which he regularly tried to escape on visits to Palestine, Spain and Cyprus. He had been born in Birmingham, the son of Polish Jews, and was brought up in Whitechapel where he first experienced antisemitism and debilitating poverty. But external factors are only partly to blame for his lack of integration. He was, as Cork describes, "at once imperiously wilful and a prey to depressive anxiety". Though he began with the desire "to dynamite the whole of English painting" as one of his friends recalled, he was undermined by the lack of en-

of a geometric grid, is no mere experiment with pure form but a blazing testimony to displacement, the grid's splintering effect becoming, Cork argues, "a metaphor for the immigrants' broken lives".

After his volte-face in the 1920s Bomberg promoted not the city but a need to restore humanity's relationship with nature; he abandoned machine-age abstraction and searched for the organic, coining the phrase "the spirit in the mass", which became his touchstone. His landscapes were from then on not merely perceived but physically experienced; the sweep of his brush conveys the fall of sunlight and the gravitational pull as we look down into the valley of La Hermida. He varied his handling according to his subject, sometimes catching evanescent effects with broad simplicity, working also, often, with saturated colour. All this is well served by this generously illustrated and fastidiously presented book. It is a worthy addition to the history of British art and affirms Bomberg's radical intelligence and passionate idealism.

## Modernist or Late Romantic?

Peter Fuller

EVELYN SILBER  
The Sculpture of Epstein: With complete catalogue  
240pp. Phaidon. £80.  
0714822620

In 1908, a series of eighteen larger than life-sized figures by an unknown sculptor, Jacob Epstein, an immigrant from New York, was unveiled in niches on the walls of what was then the British Medical Association Building in the Strand. These works were hardly innovative in any formal sense; they owed rather more to George Frampton and Frederick Pomeroy than to Rodin. But their nudity and sombre realism caused an outcry in the press.

The British art establishment rallied round to defend the sculptor and Epstein went on to produce more vigorously "primitive" carvings, such as Oscar Wilde's tomb, with its "decadent", fallen, Assyrian Angel; "Rima", the memorial to the naturalist W. H. Hudson unveiled in the bird sanctuary in Hyde Park in 1925; or the figures of "Night" and "Day" that he carved for the headquarters of the Underground Electric Railway Company a few years later. All these provoked violent controversies during which he was assailed by, among others, the academics who had at first supported him; even so, he enjoyed a flourishing practice as the maker of strongly modelled portrait heads.

After the Second World War, the controversies surrounding Epstein's work died down. He seemed to enter a new and more serene phase, in which he also won the acceptance and honours he had so long desired. But by the time of his death in 1959, his sculpture seemed strangely belighted. In the 1960s and 1970s, British sculpture followed a course which owed nothing to the one he had chosen; and his last phase received little critical attention.

Hitherto, Epstein's work has not even been properly catalogued. Evelyn Silber's *The*

however, the author admits that such a claim cannot be made with confidence. The fault lies not so much with Miss Silber's diligence, as with Epstein's studio practices, and those of his widow after his death. Epstein often determined the size of an edition no more definitively than through a hand-written entry in a Leicester Gallery catalogue. If it sold well — as with the heads of Einstein and Churchill — he, or, later, Lady Epstein, felt few inhibitions about stretching the number of casts. This makes the compilation of an exhaustive catalogue exceedingly difficult, but Silber is to be commended for the thoroughness and devotion with which she set about her task. Her book supersedes the existing literature on Epstein — most of which is less than satisfactory — and is likely to remain the standard work for many years to come.

Hitherto, there were two principal and opposing "readings" of Epstein's achievement. One school cast him as a "Pioneer of Modern Sculpture", whose claim to enduring fame rested largely on his early direct carvings, and "The Rock Drill". This was a plaster study of a visored, mechanical man which Epstein completed in his short-lived Vorticist phase at the beginning of the First World War. The figure was mounted on a "ready-made" drill, which the sculptor even thought of activating with a motor. Epstein mutilated his mechanical monster in 1915. According to the "Modernist" reading, this signalled what eventually became the sad decline of his later years. Another view of him, however, puts him forward as the Last Romantic in sculpture, the successor to Rodin, whom T. E. Hulme (who had such a deep influence on Vorticism) rejected as belonging to "the sloppy drags of the Renaissance". The Romantic interpretation stresses Epstein's "Primitivism", and his emphasis on sexuality and expressive freedom — all that technological modernism is assumed to reject.

Silber certainly does not attempt to rehabilitate Epstein as a "Pioneer of Modern Sculpture". She makes much of his debt to Rodin, yet she is sharply critical of the conventional "Romantic" reading. She focuses attention on the extent of Epstein's debt to the architectural

sculptural traditions of medieval Europe, especially the cathedrals and churches of France, and fifteenth-century Florence. The sculptor, she argues, admired the way in which such work combined realism with a monumental gravity, and was also designed, like so many of his own large pieces, for relatively restricted viewpoints. This leads her to a revaluation of the "spiritual" work of the sculptor's later years. She is surely right when she refers to the Trades Union Congress War Memorial that Epstein made towards the end of his life as "this too little regarded and woefully neglected master-work". The memorial is a compelling reinterpretation of the traditional theme of the *Pietà* — far more convincing than "Night", which fused similar imagery with more atavistic elements, and created such a stir when it was unveiled in the 1920s.

Silber stresses the traditionalism of Epstein's conception of the sculptor's task. He believed passionately in the value of carving, modelling, monumentalism, and above all architectural work. He did not wish to begin a new tradition, so much as to revitalize an old one: that, perhaps, is why his work caused such offence at first, but, with the passage of time, passed into affectionate acceptance. And yet, in a sense, the questions remain. Silber is informative on Epstein's collaboration, and eventual break, with Eric Gill. She is less so on the vexed question of the relationship of his work to Henry Moore's. And where, I wonder, does her convincing revaluation of Epstein's later "spiritual" phase leave the dominant trajectory of recent "Modernist" sculpture which traces its descent from Epstein, if at all, only through the mixed-media and mechanism of the "Rock Drill", which he himself so decisively rejected?

For a long time, it seemed as if the mainstream of Epstein's work, as Silber reads it, would leave its influence only through the work of Moore. But Silber points to the fact that some younger sculptors — she names, among others, Elisabeth Frink and Glynn Williams — "have found their own lessons in his directly related relationship with his materials". An exhibition of Epstein's work is planned for the Whitechapel Gallery later this year. It may well add further confirmation to the view that the line through Epstein, Moore and Frink into Williams has after all been the great tradition of British sculpture in our century.

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 199pp. Gollancz. £9.95.  
 0575038756

Some of the novels written by Philip K. Dick in the 1950s have appeared recently for the first time, from Gollancz and other houses. Research into his manuscripts by his executors has shown that, between 1960 and 1962, Dick wrote at least four of the half-dozen novels for which he will be remembered (afterwards came overt mental distress, intermittent creative peaks, financial success and early death). The reader of science fiction will already be familiar with *The Man in the High Castle*, *Martian Time Slip* and *Dr Bloodmoney* (the two latter titles being so misleadingly garish that academics have concentrated almost solely on *High Castle*). The fourth title from that extraordinary period of compulsive creative frenzy is *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*, the book in which Dick reaches the end of his tether as an inhabitant of a region of the American continent; it also attests to a deep, damaged involvement in the American Dream. Within months, he would begin translating his nightmares into our future.

The region is California, where the Frontier heaches on the Pacific, and the Wilderness, no longer somewhere West, turns inward to invade the bewildered heart of the citizen. Elderly Jim Fergusson sells his garage, and prepares to invest his savings in a new development. The much younger Al Miller, a used-car dealer who rents space from Fergusson, feels confusedly that Fergusson will be cheated by Chris Hurman, the local entrepreneur. But neither Fergusson nor Miller have any chance of coping with the complex surges and drives of a secular world. Words entrap them, bodily functions daze them, passions bewine them

nterly. Although he seems to dance to the tall tales he tells, Miller neither understands the time nor follows the story. He only knows that he is trapped in words – in threats, conspiracies, lies, complexities beyond his grasp – just as he is trapped in California.

Jim Fergusson dies finally, after several chapters that masterfully capture the delirium generated by his failing mind, his sullen blood-starved body; and Al Miller, convinced that his hysterical scamming has brought a mob down on him, fights out for Salt Lake City, where he is arrested, brought back to California and freed humilatingly into an almost totally decipherable world – for he has understood nothing of what has been happening. "You just a humpty dumpty", a black friend and survivor tells him as the novel closes. For such as Al Miller in Oakland there is no centre to hold to, no Frontier to explore. He has become deities.

Philip K. Dick was himself a Californian, and all his life identified with the "small" people of his world, whose numb inadequacies he portrays with an abiding gallows humour. Pawns in incomprehensible games – repairmen, car-salesmen, potters – occupy the foreground of this book and of his major SF novels. His "large" protagonists, men like Chris Hurman, may grapple stertorously with the real world, though in the SF books they fall just as thoroughly at the end to keep events from getting out of hand. *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* overrides its occasional moments of scatty irresolution to read as a sustained memorial vignette of the final days of America's innocence, in which it is the small people who are seen to bear the cost of surviving into the present. It is indeed a very contemporary book, this tale of devouring rescience. In their anomic, their bewildered soulessness, their moments of fragile decency, and in their need to believe the next story they think they understand, Dick's small people are surely current in his land.

## Romance on the Stone

Colin Greenland

GREG BEAR  
*Eon*  
 500pp. Gollancz. £10.95.  
 0575038616

With 150,000 words under a title denoting eternity, Greg Bear attempts the category of Big Science Fiction: commercially successful big novels about big things. The big thing here is an asteroid which appears without warning and moves into an evidently purposeful orbit around Earth and the Moon. Apparently deserted, the asteroid – America calls it the Stone, Russia the Potato, China the Whale – holds unequivocal evidence that it was fitted out for space travel by human hands. The hands were of our world, but not of our epoch, not even of our universe.

Compound paradox provides *Eon* with a perspective sequence of locations each larger than the one before. Much dramm might be set on an asteroid three hundred kilometres long and about the same around; more inside a hollow one; more still when the interior contains seven separate cylindrical chambers, some lined with cities or inexplicable machinery, and when explorers from different nations and alliances claim or are confined to parts of each; yet more when the seventh chamber discloses a space-warp that in itself necessitates a whole new expedition, and then gives access to an infinity of other universes.

Despite its title, what is big about Bear's novel is its scale, in space rather than time. The principal action happens within a few months, with an apparatus of prologues and epilogues, contextual parentheses a dozen years apart. In the penultimate piece of epilogue one of the characters, observing that some of the "Stoners" are remarkably aged, announces his intention of becoming even more remarkably so. He is it who introduces the word "eon", which has an imposing ring to it, or once classic-singlet-word titles of tall popular novels; but what it means lies largely outside the scope of the book itself.

The protagonist is a brilliant but inexperienced young mathematician, Patricia Luisa Vasquez. Vasquez functions as a sort of inverse dumb blonde, a late arrival on the Stone who needs to have everything explained to her at first so that her genius can take over and run things thereafter. Her background is signalled exclusively by a recurrent memory of her father reading a newspaper: nothing about being a woman, a Chicana, an educated Chicana from California; no previous consciousness of being an alien making her way through a gigantic and oppressive system. Her race and sex have nothing to do with her character or her outlook, and everything to do with marketing a big popular novel in America. She is, in

any case, more than supported by Gary Lamer, a handsome male lead, a corporate adman wizard but a rugged individualist too. Once Vasquez is perceived as a cosmic device, all the bright faces start to peel away. The Russians are stereotypes, permitted because America has a profound need for stereotype Russians. The principal Russian, Pavel Miskov, sustains an American's version of a Russian consciousness – inglorious, heavily oppressed by political dogma – null intelligence and factual education convert him to American-style liberalism and Thucydidean self-reliance. The Chinese are trickier, because America is obliged to be sensitive about them, so Bear makes the principal one a white woman born in China of British parents. She is characterized by charming and amusing slips in her English: a stereotype Chinese permit because she doesn't look Chinese.

Attentively-plotted international turned hampers and jeopardizes exploration of the Stone while sparking the Fourth World War back on Earth, yet the characters' ostensible racial and ideological diversity does little to colour or differentiate their responses to increasingly overwhelming and alienating experiences. Everyone is limited by science, which is glorified by Bear, as by Arthur C. Clarke, Isaac Asimov, Larry Niven and others, as a linear, progressive, liberating if not painless thing to do.

Politics, here, is that which snarls up science. "In its most crucial hour, the human race was represented by a team of blindly searching, hug-tied and gagged intellectuals." Nationalism and "security" are to blame. No matter that the scientists are also demonstrably psychologically blinded, socially hog-tied, emotionally gagged. As usual in this sort of SF, sex is a crisis. Sex intrudes: because Bear is uncomfortably aware that even an intellectual requires some sex to function efficiently, and so does the big popular novel, to function commercially.

SF novelists, most notably Olaf Stapledon, have managed a number of come by adopting remote and lofty viewpoints. But remoteness and loftiness are not commercial attitudes. Bear's narration is populist, thoroughly involved with his characters, figments too strong for anything other than romance, yet tripping over the enormous unknown. What confronts them is future familiar, Lego utopian, geometric buildings clownily inhibited by simplified, reasonable people, each fully informed and fluently conversant about everything. There is danger, and more politics, as Bear understands politics, but in a mess, and precious little misunderstanding. Science vanishes into magic. *The Wizard of Oz* is mentioned, but without irony, and Patricia Vasquez is given a magic wand with the power to take her home again. "It's a fairy tale", lingers use of her colleagues – in hysteria, because Bear can sense that, but can't face it.

## Idiotic purity

Richard Deveson

MARK FRANKLAND  
*Richard Robertovich*  
 216pp. John Murray. £9.95.  
 0719543304

Dostoevskian Idiots are probably thin enough even on their native ground, but an English Idiot in Russia must be a rare creature indeed. Richard Southwell isn't a decamped member of the Homiotean, or even a member of the Party; he's a bedazzled idealist who takes his wife and children to Moscow with him in 1958, in the sincere belief that by participating in the noble, austere Soviet experiment he can help to make the world a better place. And yet it is the strength of Mark Frankland's sensitive novel that it renders this unlikely figure not only very believable but, in the end, unexpectedly attractive. Richard Robertovich (as he calls himself) is maddeningly guileless, self-deceiving and doomed; but in the midst of his corruption and intimidations of Soviet life he retains a dignified, idiotic sort of purity.

The story is told through a collection of letters, about marriage and the Russian Revolution, mainly by Richard and by his friend Igor, who

undersands Richard's predicament almost better than Richard does himself. Richard's wife goes back to England after several years of struggling with meatless meals and broken boilers, and he then falls in love with Irina, the wife of a rising apparatchik. Irina is Richard's wishful Russia, his dream and his undoing. All-knowing guardians from the KGB (or the like) move in to abort the adulterous scandal; "friends" close ranks against the lovers; the system will not be denied. "Our souls have a greater depth", one of the linguists says, in another Dostoevskian echo: "but spiritual burden is so much greater."

Frankland himself doesn't endorse this bit of dialectical contortism, but he does show tellingly how Soviet life can be comforting to a man like Richard: politics don't have to be worried about, because the guardians are seeing to that; money doesn't have to be grubbed for. Living can consist of the simple things (which are lyrically described): snow, wooden houses, trees, bread, glossy mushrooms, pink clothes of pickled garlic. And yet even in his final days of defeat, when he turns to comfort himself with the thought that he would once have detested – the Easter service, *The Dream of Gerontius* – Richard hardly knows how happy he has been in the world.

## Chopping and changing

Peter Kemp

ERNEST HEMINGWAY  
*The Garden of Eden*  
 247pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.  
 024114987

It was once unkindly remarked of Hemingway that he attempted the impossible: he tried to be more virile than Gertrude Stein. *The Garden of Eden* – started in 1946 and worked on intermittently until his death in 1961 – dramatizes just such a struggle. In it, he made masculinity compete with female mannishness.

Ever since Brett in his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, with her habit of talking like a lesbian telegram – "Give n chop a brandy and soda" – women who seemed partly male exerted a very strong hold on Hemingway's imagination. Especially spell-binding to him are girls who have had a short-back-and-sides. Brett has "hair brushed back like a boy's". Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms* wants to cut her hair as short as that of her lover Frederic. Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has hair that has been so severely cropped it resembles a beaver pelt. Apparently, Havelock Ellis's disquisitions on hair-fetishism made his *Erotic Symbolism* favourite reading for Hemingway.

Certainly, *The Garden of Eden* bristles with a fixation on female crew-cuts. Essentially, it's the story of a man who gives his wife the brush-off because she has her hair cut for the wrong reasons. Barbers' shops – in Cannes, Biarritz and Algiers/Morocco – play a surprisingly prominent role in the story. Hair length becomes of crucial significance – as does hair colour: one of

the ways the hero's wife murders their marriage is by insisting that he has his hair dyed. When the story opens, though, all seems idyllic. On honeymoon in the Midi are David and Catherine Bourne. She's rich. He's a brilliant writer and marvellous lover. Though the area around Aigues Mortes proves short on the usual facilities the Hemingway hero requires to display his physical prowess (bull-rings, safari-trails, war-zones), there is a local canal which enables David to show off his sporting skills. Applauding his energy and expertise at fishing, with its "tragical violence", a by-stander gasps, "No one ever caught such fish with such tackle."

David's stern broodings about the need to achieve "the clarity" and "the dreadful true understanding" never let you forget that he is a serious author. His recently published second novel, even more masterly than his first, has won ecstatic reviews: "The reception was sensational". "The point was that the book could not have been better received". These appreciative press-notices cause ominous furries of irritation in Catherine. But the main warning signs that the honeymoon is souring centre less on his clippings than her croppings.

One night, after she has unexpectedly returned from the barber's with "a fine boy's haircut", David is startled to hear Catherine whisper to him in bed, "Will you change and be my girl and let me take you?" She now wishes, she informs him, to be addressed as "Peter"; his bedtime name, he learns with a shock, is to be "Catherine". "Where I'm holding you you are a girl", David grunts in an effort to preserve the proprieties, but his univalent mate insists on role-swapping. Exactly what the implications of this are for their love-making remains

obscure: David merely divulges that their sex-life has become a matter of "dark things" and "devil things". A gruff brute, like most Hemingway males, he worries that he and Catherine are living "wildly and dangerously", and begins to fear that she could have homosexual tendencies. Catherine's ability to convince herself that her brawny, hirsute husband is a "beautiful lovely" girl would, you'd think, already indicate a lesbian drive of almost awesome proportions – and, soon enough, she's making sure that even David is left in no doubt about this.

Again, haircuts bring things to a head. A "handsome" girl, Maria, accosts Catherine to inquire where she got her scissored coiffure, then later turns up – identically cropped – announcing that she has become infatuated with the Bournes. After sleeping with each of them, she shows, he is relieved to discover, a wholesome preference for David, and starts to disport herself with decent womanliness in bed.

Catherine – by this stage outrageously parading her androgynousness all around Nice in flannel trousers and a shirt – now proves to be both bitch and bitch. To David's horror, she reveals a diabolic hatred of his writing. On one terrible occasion, she sneers at his adjectives. On another, she viciously maintains that "He makes mistakes in spelling and grammar." Finally, she incinerates his rave reviews and manuscripts in the bin – and, lest there should be any uncertainty about her witch-like status, stirs the ashes with a "broomstick".

Fortunately, Maria has by this time metamorphosed from Eton-cropped siren to the kind of sycophantic yes-woman the Hemingway male demands. When not admiring David's physique, she's adulating his fiction: "it's wonderful", "it moved me very deeply", etc. Thanks to this, as the novel ends, he is triumphantly re-writing, and even improving on, one of the short stories Catherine destroyed. This story – reproduced in full, and about the young David hunting an elephant

## Truthful relations

Gabriel Josipovici

LEONARDO SCIASCIA  
*Stellin Uncle*: Four novellas  
 Translated by N. S. Thompson  
 205pp. Manchester: Corgi. £8.95.  
 0856355550

Like many major writers of prose fiction Leonardo Sciascia was a slow starter. *Gli zii di Stellin* was published in 1958, when he was thirty-seven, and though it contains the occasional clumsiness it also reveals all his great qualities: his grasp of political and historical issues; his clarity and precision; his humour; his love of Sicily; his understanding of people.

A Sicilian Uncle is what we call a Dutch Uncle, one who speaks unswelcome truths. Though in one of these novellas there is an aunt who returns from America, and Stellin (as Uncle Joel) is the absent centre of another, it is the children who are, as so often in Sciascia, the truth-tellers. But over and above them is the chief Sicilian Uncle, Sciascia himself. For him, facility with words goes with a lack of fastidiousness in morals. The first to welcome the Germans to Sicily were also the first to welcome the Americans; a hundred years earlier, the pattern was established first with the forces which came to crush the mild rebellion of 1848 and then with the landing of Garibaldi's troops on the island. Sciascia celebrates the silent dignity of the Sicilian workers and peasants, the puzzled and the put-upon. But he also knows the dangers of effusiveness. There are no long theoretical debates here; no onguished soul-searchings concerning the clash of public and private duties; no denunciations of capitalism, of Fascism, of communism. True political writing, for him, is that which apprehends and responds to the way human beings react to the events of history. Taking a handful of people who happen to live on an island on the edge of Europe, Sciascia shows us what has been happening to the world since 1848, and even what has happened to man since he was first placed on the earth. These four modest novellas teach one more than all the volumes of Toynbee's *Study of History*.

We all use thoughts and words to evade issues, avoid painful choices. Many Italian writers over the past hundred and fifty years have been more interested in sentiment and rhetoric than in the complexity of the truth. Sciascia

comes at the truth from odd angles – a child responding to the events of 1943-4; a Sicilian soldier escaping the sulphur mines and going to fight for the Nationalists in Spain; a simple up to in making a pact with Hitler – and so manages to pin it down where other writers would be seduced by ideal colour or the exigencies of plot or the value of their own ideas. But he needs good translators. N. S. Thompson does an excellent job in places, but is also prone to sad lapses.

The end of the first story is a case in point. It deals with the narrator's aunt, who has settled in America, who during the war helps her sister's family with food and clothing, and then, when it is over, returns for a visit with her husband, young son and twenty-year-old daughter. The adolescent narrator develops a crush for the girl, who lets him take her out for walks so that she can smoke unseen by her tyrannical mother. At the end it turns out that the trip was planned not just for the sake of crowding over the poor Sicilian relations, but also to find a husband for the girl from the old place. The boy's ne'er-do-well Fascist-sympathizing uncle is selected, and the last scene takes place at the station as the Sicilian family watch the others leave for the riches and pleasures of the New World. The boy, bitterly hurt by what he takes as a betrayal, mutters to himself: "La pena mia è che camparà cornuto". The mother looks at him in horror and the father clouts him over the head. The English, "The trouble is, she'll be unfaithful", is not only horribly attitudinal but makes nonsense of the parents' reaction, which is obviously less to the sentiment than to its crude expression. In the Italian the words, thrust forward from the boy's unconscious and clearly the result of his frustration rather than any prophetic power, nevertheless suddenly seem to speak a truth not just about the girl, but about the entire post-war era and about America. We go on thinking about them, about the girl, the uncle and the child, wondering what will indeed become of them all. Only that which is precise can be resonant, as Eliot said. Sciascia has always known it and known how to set on it.

A new edition of the *Directory of Writers' Circles* is now available, price £2 post free, from the editor, Jill Dick, Oldacre, Horderns Park Road, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire, SK12 6SY. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to Laurence Poulton Ltd.

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Edited by Harry Bober

Translated from the French by Marthel Mathews

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## Small people

John Clute

PHILIP K. DICK  
Humpty Dumpty in Oakland  
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0575038756

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The story is told through a collection of letters, short memoirs, and reflections, written mainly by Richard and by his friend Igor, who

understands Richard's predicament almost better than Richard does himself. Richard's wife goes back to England after several years of struggling with meatless meals and broken boilers, and he then falls in love with Irina, the wife of a rising apparatchik. Irina is Richard's wishful Russia, his dream and his undoing. All-knowing guardians from the KGB (or the like) move in to abort the adulterous scandal; "friends" close ranks against the lovers; the system will not be denied. "Our souls have a greater depth", one of the inquisitors says, in another Dostoevskyan echo; "our spiritual burden is so much greater."

Frankland himself doesn't endorse this bit of dialectical contortism, but he does show tellingly how Soviet life can be comforting to a man like Richard: politics don't have to be worried about, because the guardians are seeing to that; money doesn't have to be grabbed for, living can consist of the simple things (which are lyrically described): snow, wooden houses, trees, bread, glossy mushrooms, pink cloves of pickled garlic. And yet even in his final days of defeat, when he turns to comfort himself, he would once have detested – the Easter service, *The Dream of Gerontius* – Richard hardly knows how to live in the USSR and it is absurd him.

## Chopping and changing

Peter Kemp

ERNEST HEMINGWAY  
The Garden of Eden  
247pp. Hamish Hamilton. £9.95.  
0241119877

It was once unkindly remarked of Hemingway that he attempted the impossible: he tried to be more virile than Gertrude Stein. *The Garden of Eden* – started in 1946 and worked on intermittently until his death in 1961 – dramatizes just such a struggle. In it, he-male masculinity competes with female femininity.

Ever since Brett in his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, with her habit of talking like a lesbian telegram – "Give a chap a brandy and soda" – women who seemed partly male exerted a very strong hold on Hemingway's imagination. Especially spell-binding to him are girls who have had a short-back-and-sides. Brett has "hair brushed back like a boy's". Catherine in *A Farewell to Arms* wants to cut her hair as short as that of her lover Frederic. Maria in *For Whom the Bell Tolls* has hair that has been so severely cropped it resembles a beaver pelt. Apparently, Havelock Ellis's disquisitions on hair-fetishism made his *Erotic Symbolism* a favourite reading for Hemingway.

Certainly, *The Garden of Eden* bristles with a fixation on female crew-cuts. Essentially, it's the story of a man who gives his wife the brush-off because she has her hair cut for the wrong reasons. Barbers' shops – in Cannes, Biarritz and Algiers Moros – play a surprisingly prominent role in the story. Hair length becomes of crucial significance – as does hair colour: one of

the ways the hero's wife murders their marriage is by insisting that he has his hair dyed.

When the story opens, though, all seems idyllic. On honeymoon in the Midi are David and Catherine Bourne. She's rich. He's a brilliant writer and marvellous lover. Though the area around Algiers Maries proves short on the usual facilities the Hemingway hero requires to display his physical prowess (bull-rings, safaris, war-zones), there is a local canal which enables David to show off his sporting skills. Applauding his energy and expertise at fishing, with its "tragic violence", a by-stander gasps, "No one ever caught such fish with such tackle."

David's stem broodings about the need to achieve "the clarity" and "the dreadful true understanding" never let you forget that he is a serious author. His recently published second novel, even more masterly than his first, has won ecstatic reviews: "The reception was sensational". "The point was that the book could not have been better received". These appreciative press-statements cause ominous flurries of irritation in Catherine. But the main warning signs that the honeymoon is souring centre less on his clippings than her croppings.

One night, after she has unexpectedly returned from the barber's with "a fine boy's haircut", David is startled to hear Catherine whisper to him in bed, "Will you change and be my girl and let me take you?" She now wishes, she informs him, to be addressed as "Peter", his bedtime name, he learns with a shock, is to be "Catherine". "Where I'm holding you you are a girl", David grunts in an effort to preserve the proprieties, but his ambivalent mate insists on role-swapping. Exactly what the implications of this are for their love-making remains

## Truthful relations

Gabriel Josipovici

LEONARDO SCIASCIA  
Sicilian Uncles: Four novellas  
Translated by N. S. Thompson  
205pp. Manchester: Corgi. £8.95.  
0856355550

Like many major writers of prose fiction Leonardo Sciascia was a slow starter. *Gift of the Sea* was published in 1958, when he was thirty-seven, and though it contains the occasional clumsiness it also reveals all his great qualities: his grasp of political and historical issues; his clarity and precision; his humour; his love of Sicily; his understanding of people.

A Sicilian Uncle is what we call a Dutch Uncle, one who speaks unwelcome truths. Though in one of these novellas there is an unwelcome truth returns from America, and Stefan (as Uncle Joe) is the nearest centre of another, it is the children who are, as so often in Sciascia, the truth-tellers. But over and above them is the chief Sicilian Uncle, Sciascia himself. For him, facility with words goes with a lack of fastidiousness in morals. The first to welcome the Germans to Sicily were also the first to welcome the Americans; a hundred years earlier, the pattern was established first with the forces which came to crush the mild rebellion of 1848 and then with the landing of Garibaldi's troops on the island. Sciascia celebrates the silent dignity of the Sicilian workers and peasants, the puzzled and the put-upon. But he also knows the dangers of effusiveness. There are no long theoretical debates here; no anguished soul-searchings concerning the clash of public and private duties; no denunciations of capitalism, of Fascism, of communism. True political writing, far from, is that which apprehends and responds to the way human beings react to the events of history. Taking a handful of people who happen to live on an island on the edge of Europe, Sciascia shows us what has been happening to the world since 1848, and even what has happened to man since he was first placed on the earth. These four modest novellas teach us more than all the volumes of Toynbee's *Study of History*.

We all use thoughts and words to evade issues, avoid painful choices. Many Italian writers over the past hundred and fifty years have been more interested in sentiment and rhetoric than in the complexity of the truth. Sciascia

observes: David merely divulges that their sex-life has become a matter of "dark things" and "devil things". A gruff brute, like most Hemingway males, he worries that he and Catherine are living "wildly and dangerously", and begins to fear that she could have homosexual tendencies. Catherine's ability to convince herself that her brawny, hirsute husband is a "beautiful lovely" girl would, you'd think, already indicate a lesbian drive of almost awesome proportions – and, seen enough, she's making sure that even David is left in no doubt about this.

Again, haircuts bring things to a head. A "handsome" girl, Maria, accosts Catherine to inquire where she got her scissored coiffure, then later turns up – identically cropped – announcing that she has become infatuated with the Bourne. After sleeping with each of them, she shows, he is relieved to discover, a wholesome preference for David, and starts to dispart herself with decent womanliness in bed.

Catherine – by this stage outrageously parading her androgynousness all around Nice in flannel trousers and a shirt – now praves to be both bitch and bitch. To David's horror, she reveals a diabolic hatred of his writing. On one terrible occasion, she sneers at his adjectives. On another, she viciously maintains that "He makes mistakes in spelling and grammar." Finally, she incinerates his rave reviews and manuscripts in the bin – and, lest there should be any uncertainty about her witch-like status, stirs the ashes with a "broomstick".

Fortunately, Maria has by this time metamorphosed from Eton-cropped siren to the kind of sympathetic yes-woman the Hemingway male demands. When not admiring David's physique, she's adulating his fiction: "it's wonderful", "it moved me very deeply", etc. Thanks to this, as the novel ends, he is triumphantly re-writing, and even improving on, one of the short stories Catherine destroyed. This story – reproduced in full, and about the young David hunting an elephant

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Emile Mâle

Edited by Harry Bober  
Translated from the French by Marjorie Mathews

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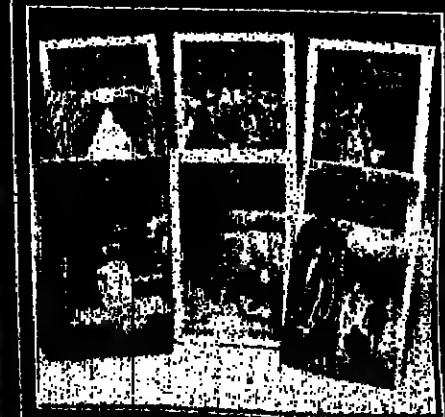
A new edition of the *Directory of Writers' Circles* is now available, price £2 post free, from the editor, Jill Dick, Oldacre, Horsham Park Road, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire SK12 6SV. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to Laurence Poultinger Ltd.

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# American notes

## Christopher Hitchens

Last week two courts, one in Boston and the other in New York, made momentous rulings. The decisions taken in each case are very significant for authorship and for publishing. They are also striking (and occasionally amusing) for the contrast they afford between American and English conceptions of the law and of literary production.

The Boston case involved a claim of defamation and invasion of privacy by Jane Anderson. She averred that the 1979 film version of Sylvia Plath's novel *The Bell Jar* was "a moral and ethical outrage". She maintained that the character of Joan Gilling was based on her own experience and personality, and sued all those connected in any way with the making and distribution of the film. These included Ted Hughes in his capacity as administrator of the Plath estate.

The New York case arose from a claim by J. D. Salinger that a biography of him by Ian Hamilton was an infringement of "fair use" as defined by the laws of copyright. A district court had earlier found that Hamilton had not made "excessive" use of letters by Salinger in the public domain, but Salinger took the book's publishers, Random House, to an Appeals Hearing none the less.

On January 30, the Massachusetts District Court was told that Dr Anderson would settle for \$150,000 and a public admission that the makers of the *Bell Jar* film had "unintentionally defamed" her. (She had originally demanded \$6 million and an apology.) These conditions were agreed by the defendants on the advice of their insurers. And on the same day a Federal Appeals Court in Manhattan ordered a preliminary injunction against *J. D. Salinger: A writing life*. Random House, which had just listed the book in its spring catalogue, has not yet decided whether to contest the ruling any further.

For independent writers, Nor does it describe the ramifications that are being gloomily anticipated. Let me take both cases in order, and show how the ramifications justify the despondency.

To the matter of *The Bell Jar*, friends of the Post Laureate are entitled to feel at least temporarily elated. Ted Hughes could have proved to the court that he had never heard of Anderson. More, he could have shown that he could never have heard of her. He could have introduced in evidence a letter from Sylvia Plath to James Michie of Heinemann, dated November 14, 1961, in which Plath gives the provenance of all her scenes and characters and says, "No, I've not forgotten about the libel issue. In fact I've thought about little else." Discussing the figure of Joan Gilling in this list she writes: "Jane (I'm changing her name to Joan) is fictional and so is her suicide—I mean it isn't based on a real one. The women at the hospital are all fictitious."

Now, Anderson claimed that the film revealed "the painful and private facts" that she and Plath once shared a psychiatric ward. She also claimed that the film represents her as a lesbian. She made somewhat less of the fact that the film also shows her as a suicide, since she had to be sufficiently alive to bring the lawsuit. This apparent contradiction didn't get tested in open court either. And, since *The Bell Jar* was first published in 1963 and has provoked no law suits or other complaints in the intervening years, it would have been instructive to know why the plaintiff waited until a movie was produced. It would also have been instructive to learn why Anderson still waited for some years after that. But these questions were not asked. So, as Ted Hughes's attorney, Victor Kovner, put it:

Since the plaintiff did not pursue her earlier contention that the novel had defamed her and has conceded that Mr Hughes did not act wrongfully, many of the serious concerns about the potential impact of the law suit upon the authors of fiction were not realized. None the less, it must be noted that the law, as it stands, provides insufficient protection for authors of fiction. Until the courts recognize that fiction is entitled to a special measure of constitutional protection, claims by people who identify themselves with one character or another will continue to threaten expression.

Or, as Plath put it in 1961, in that same letter to James Michie:

The opportunities for suing authors as mentioned under libel in my writers' handbook seem infinite . . . I don't want to get paranoid and think I can't ever say anything nasty and foul about Mrs Cleek, for fear thousands of Mrs Cleek's I don't know will rise up and drive me and my babes into the woods.

The father of the babes, in his affidavit to the court, speaks of the trouble to which he went in setting terms for potential directors of a *Bell Jar* motion picture. As he says, his prime concern was to protect Sylvia's mother, Aurelia Plath, and the conditions he imposed caused Joseph Losey to withdraw an offer for the purchase of the film rights. How was Hughes supposed to know about the existence of Dr Jane Anderson? As he states in his affidavit, giving the impression of a man bayed by hounds:

According to Stephen Tabor, the bibliographer of Sylvia Plath, by 1977, when the last extension of the option agreement was granted, over 650 separate works about Sylvia Plath had been published. I have intentionally avoided reading virtually all of these writings in order to keep my sanity.

In point of fact, the name of Jane Anderson only appears once, and glancingly, in any published work on Plath. But perhaps more important, Hughes avowed under penalty of perjury that, "based on my experience as a writer and on my knowledge of Sylvia Plath, I can state without reservation that *The Bell Jar* is fiction". Here, as it were, is the nub:

The Joan Gilling character, as with all characters in *The Bell Jar*, represents an amalgam of events and people from Sylvia's actual experience from which she created a fictionalized character. Joan Gilling is not a real person; she is a created character in a novel.

It would have been good to have heard this 'solid defence of the obvious in court. But Kovner is right. The fact that Anderson finally dropped Hughes from her list of offenders (not without subjecting him to a great deal of legal and emotional travail) may, in one way, be welcome. Yet the fact that these matters went to court and were decided by a judge is a disservice to the work of others. Hughes's affidavit

even attempts to allow for the "identification" of an obscure woman with a woman in a famous novel—in fact, with a deceased woman in a famous novel:

I believe it likely that the suicide of Joan Gilling in *The Bell Jar* was based on an episode that took place in 1957, the year that Sylvia and I were living at Smith College, when a Smith student committed suicide by hanging herself on the College grounds. Similarly, hanging herself is depicted in the novel as being involved in assisting Esther Greenwood when Esther began hemorrhaging heavily after having sexual intercourse. Although the novel depicts the episode as occurring while Esther is a patient in a mental hospital, the real life basis for this fictional episode occurred in Sylvia's life well after she had left the mental hospital. The person who helped Sylvia in fact her room mate at the time, Nancy Hunter Stein.

I suggest that this kind of disclosure is at least as painful to the defendants as the laborious work of exegesis and conjecture must have been to the plaintiff.

In the case of *Jerome D. Salinger against Random House Inc and Ian Hamilton*, there is at any rate no doubt about the plaintiff's identity. Last November, after he had quit his New Hampshire seclusion three times for the purpose of the suit, Salinger was told that Hamilton's book was "a serious, carefully researched biography", whose publication would be "of social and educational value". Judge Pierre Laval added that quotations from the letters were "too minimal to subject Salinger to any serious harm". Random House, which had maintained that Salinger's suit was "an ill conceived privacy action masquerading as a claim for copyright infringement", had already agreed with Hamilton to revise the work in order to minimize direct quotation. This despite the fact that many of Salinger's letters had been found in libraries and in other places of public resort.

An example given in the judges' written opinion last week conveys the nature of the difficulty. Salinger was jealous of Oona O'Neill, a friend, and in a letter to her in 1943 he wrote, "I can see them at home even-

ings. Chaplin squatting grey and nude, atop his chiffronier, swinging his thyroid around his head by his bamboo cane, like a dead rat."

In order to avoid direct quotation, Hamilton had reworded this as follows:

At one point in a letter to Whit Burnett, he provides a pen portrait of the Happy Hour chef Chaplin: the comedian, ancient and unclothed, is brandishing his walking-stick—attached to the stick, and horribly resembling a lifeless rodent, some of Chaplin's old organs.

This, in the opinion of the judges, borrows Salinger's mood of expression as well as his similes. Actually it shows what happens when literary criticism meets the law. The two judges state that: "The biographer has no inherent right to copy the 'accuracy' or the 'vividness' of the letter-writer's expression. Indeed 'vividness of description' is precisely an attribute of the author's expression that he is entitled to protect."

The point is sharply, though unwittingly, made by defendant Hamilton in the course of his deposition in this case. On cross-examination, he is pressed as to why he copied a stylistic device that Salinger had employed in one of the letters. He responds: "I wanted to convey the fact that Salinger was adopting an ironic tone . . ."

When the cross-examiner asks: "Couldn't you have stated that he had an ironic tone?" Hamilton replies, "That would have made a pedestrian sentence. I didn't wish to put my name to it." But when dealing with copyrighted expression, a biographer (or any other copier) may frequently have to content himself with reporting only the fact of what his subject did, even if he thereby pens a "pedestrian" sentence.

Of course I cannot swear to it, but I have difficulty imagining an English court telling an author, in effect, "if you want to be ironic why don't you just say so?" The precedent cited by the judges comes from the supreme court which (see *American notes*, December 1986) ruled that President Ford owned the history of his term in office. Authors and publishers are slowly learning to adjust to courts which discuss fiction as if it were biography, and biog-

raphy as if it were trespass.

# Letters

## The Conquest of Peru

Sir, — It is saddening to see such prominence given to Mario Vargas Llosa's romantically dramatic view of Peruvian history (Latin American Fiction and Reality, January 30). His attempt to explain the collapse of the Incas civilization and the subsequent course of history in the Andean region largely in terms of the violent moment of the Conquest does a grave injustice to the many scholars who have worked—as painstakingly as his mentor Porras Barrenechea could ever have wished—to establish a legitimate context in which the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the Americas may be viewed.

Such a context has come to include most notably the factor of disease. It is by now widely accepted that the indigenous population of the Americas was reduced in many regions by as much as 95 per cent within two or three generations of the arrival of the Europeans, due to the ravages of epidemic infection: with no immunity to such illnesses as typhoid and smallpox, the Indians died in their millions. Patterns of depopulation thus established were reinforced subsequently by labour systems imposed by the Spaniards, which were frequently grafted on to existing native socio-economic structures. With widespread miscegenation, these factors combine to produce a vivid account of historical change in the colonies, an account which is particularly useful for being able to draw out regional variations in development.

Mario Vargas Llosa dismisses something called "scientific" history in favour of the narrative approach. No serious historian of Latin America would for a moment deny a central role to the chronicles of the Conquest, but taken by themselves, they lead us away from reality. This distinguished novelist appears not to have taken account of the work of at least three generations of demographic and ethnohistorians who genuinely wish all of Latin American history to be told. Such work may be slow and tedious, but it does not lead itself to facile generalization about the nature of the colonial past, but its methodological credentials are at least in place.

RODNEY WATSON.

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## 'Conspiracy of Silence'

Sir, — According to Joseph Brodsky in his illuminating review of *Conspiracy of Silence: The secret life of Anthony Blunt* by Barrie Penrose and Simon Freeman (January 30), Russia's interest in the Dardanelles (the outer limit, he thinks, of its interest in the Middle East, "the Mediterranean Basin", before 1956) was dictated "until the Suez Crisis" more by "its traditional animosity towards Turkey than [by the pursuit of] any practical purposes". This, he apparently considers, has always been the case. But has it? To take pre-revolutionary Russia only, since a very considerable proportion of its foreign trade and the quasi-totality of its exports (mainly grain) from its southern

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 315

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than March 6. A prize of £20 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that, the most nearly correct—in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 315" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on March 13.

1 He only can please long, who by tempering the acid of astice with the sugar of civility, and alloying the best wit with the fragility of humble chat, can make the true punch of conversation; and as that punch can be drunk in the greatest quantity which has the largest proportion of water, so that companion will be of greatest welcome, whose talk flows out with inoffensive, copiousness, and unenvied simplicity.

2 Dazed by respect or laughter, he would reel from saw to reported, Esteate for the first, Five thousand hours, at worst.

3 Where be your gibes now, your gambols, your songs, your flashes of merriment, that were wont to

provinces went through the Straits, its policy regarding the Dardanelles had an eminently practical motivation if only for economic, let alone other, reasons. Trouble in the Balkans—a constant threat at the time—even without the involvement of Russia, could mean the closure of the Straits, as in fact happened just before the First World War with disastrous results for Russian trade. "Traditional animosity towards Turkey" played a very small role indeed relative to such practical considerations. Patterns of foreign trade have changed since then, but not enough to obviate Russia's interest in the Dardanelles (or, for that matter, the Middle East) for practical reasons.

KYRIL FITZLYON,  
2 Arlington Cottages, Sutton Lane, London W4.

## Pius XII and the Serbs

Sir, — In his excellent review of Owen Chadwick's book *Britain and the Vatican during the Second World War* (January 23), Denis Mack Smith writes that the Pope "certainly gave offence by officially receiving Pavelli, the Croat leader who had murdered hundreds of thousands of non-Catholics and forcibly 'converted' as many more". Details of these atrocities, which included killings estimated at 30,000 Jews, 700,000 Serb-Orthodox and conversion to Catholicism of over 200,000 Orthodox, should be considered fully when making a judgment on Pius XII.

How much did the Pope know about these events? Rusinovic, Pavelli's representative at the Vatican, had regular conversations with the Pope and the cardinals. The conversions must have been a topic, but one presumes that the massacres were not discussed. However, those cardinals who wanted to be informed knew the facts. In *Escape from the Anhalt* (1985) Hubert Butler quotes from Rusinovic's report to his Foreign Minister about the audience with Cardinal Tisserant on March 5, 1942. The Cardinal said: "I know for sure that even the Franciscans of Bosnia-Herzegovina, who in his hand, led an armed gang and destroyed Orthodox churches. No civilised and cultured man, let alone a priest, can behave like that."

The argument that the Pope did not do more for the Jews and the Poles from fear that such action would have made matters worse seems to be invalid in the case of the Serbs. The Nazis had little interest in what Pavelli's enlarged Croatia, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, should be a purely Catholic State.

Pius XII never made a public statement in defence of the Serbs. Even now, over forty years later, the Vatican has not pronounced on the part the Catholic Church played in the conversion process or on the involvement of some of its clergy in the atrocities. Many Serbs still hope that a Slav Pope will eventually take the initiative which could lead to a permanent reconciliation between Serbs and Croats, his fellow Slavs.

ALEKSA GAVRILOVIC.

3 Rowley Avenue, Stafford.

## Nobel Economists

Sir, — I was bemused to read Alan Walters's review of *Lives of the Laureates*, edited by William Breit and Roger W. Spencer (January 30). The volume reviewed is on seven American recipients of the Nobel Prize in economics. Sir Alan manages to combine comments on the seven with an attack on two European Nobel Laureates whom he accuses of committing "the most egregious errors of simple analysis". He even questions the credibility of the Swedish Academy which awards the Prize.

Both Sir John Hicks and Gunnar Myrdal have more than fifty years of distinguished contributions to economics behind them and the attack on them, in single-sentence asides, is gratuitous. Neither of them is in the habit of committing "errors of simple analysis". Perhaps "errors of dogma" would have been the more appropriate phrase to use since neither of the eminent economists is known as a subscriber to the beliefs propagated by Mrs Thatcher's favourite economist.

By sub-editorial accident or design, a reviewer in a column adjacent to that of Sir Alan writes about a former adviser to successive governments as "a good example of how successful an economist can be if he avoids encumbering himself with ideology". The message is clear.

TIBOR BARNÁ.

Bearnacre, Westmeston, Hassocks, Sussex.

## Baudelaire, James, Poe

Sir, — I trust Harold Beaver will not object if I point out two minor, but persistent, errors in his review of I. M. Walker's *Edgar Allan Poe: The critical heritage* (January 2).

Henry James did not review *Les Fleurs du mal* in 1876. The only edition of the book in print at the time James wrote his article was one published by Michel Lévy in 1868; it is unlikely that James would review a book that had been on the market for eight years. In a letter to Henry James dated December 12, 1875, his Baudelaire reviewer, he writes: "I have read in his *Fleurs du Mal*, original and in a certain sense elevated . . . it is a mild and spiritualistic book today. Get it and write about it in the *Nation* or *Atlantic* . . ." Four months later, on April 27, 1876, Henry James published his essay (not review) in the *Nation*. I suspect that William was not too happy about it.

The words about curs and cemeteries, so often attributed to Baudelaire, were not his own, but those of James Hannay, who published an edition of Poe's poems in England in 1853. Apropos of the treacherous "Memoir" by the "pious scribbler" Griswold, Hannay was moved to exclaim "have they not in America, as here, a rule at all Cemeteries that 'no dogs are admitted'?" Baudelaire read this acidulous question and adapted it for use in his own preface to *Les Histoires extraordinaires* three years later.

W. T. BANDY.

Box 1814B, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee 37233.

## Joseph Roth

Sir, — I refer to Anthony Sattin's review (January 16) of Joseph Roth's novel *Hotel Savoy*. To my knowledge Roth did not commit suicide in Paris in 1939. True, he was desperate and literally drank himself to death.

He died on May 27, 1939, in a Paris hospital for the poor but not by his own hand.

EVA BORNEMANN.

A-4612 Seheren, Austria.

## Josef Škvorecký

Sir, — Roger Scruton's account of Josef Škvorecký's novel *Miraki* (January 23) seems a little confused. It would appear that Professor Scruton is describing the real-life events which inspired the novel rather than the work itself, since this version does not quite tally with Škvorecký's narrative. But if he is talking about real-life events rather than those of Škvorecký's narrative, why is he using the name of Škvorecký's fictional priest, Father Doufal? The name of the real-life priest involved in the Čičov miracle was Toufar.

JAN ČULIK.

325 Kilmarnock Road, Glasgow.

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*Bernard*

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## Inner circles of the imagination

David Robey

PETER DRONKE  
Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions  
153pp. Cambridge University Press. £19.50.  
0521 321522

As often happens with poets' statements about their own work, the partial commentary on *Paradiso* attributed to Dante himself, in the letter to his patron Can Grande della Scala, comes as a disappointment to anyone who hopes to find in it the key to the poem's interpretation. By distinguishing between the literal and allegorical subjects of the *Divine Comedy*, this much-discussed text lends considerable support to the everlasting urge on the part of scholars to find hidden meanings in the poem, but gives only the vaguest indication of what such meanings might be. The *Comedy's* allegorical subject is defined as "man according as by his merits or demerits in the exercise of his free will he is deserving of reward or punishment by justice". Like most if not all subsequent attempts at the allegorical interpretation of the poem, this formula is an utterly inadequate account of the real complexity of its content.

The letter to Can Grande in particular, and the allegorical interpretation of the *Comedy* in

general, are both central interests of Peter Dronke's book. He puts forward a new and persuasive argument against the attribution of the letter to Dante, on the grounds that it does not employ the conventional rhetorical cadences, the *cursum* of medieval rhetoric, that characterize the poet's principal Latin writings. But his more important point is that any allegorical interpretation, whether by the poet himself or anyone else, tends to reduce the meaning of the *Comedy* to commonplaces and to fail to "do justice to the stature of Dante's imagination". Instead, in his introductory chapter Dronke points to alternative conceptions of literary meaning in earlier medieval writers (notably Alan of Lille, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Boncompagno and the Chartres Platonist William of Conches), expressed in terms such as image, metaphor, symbol, hidden comparison. Such conceptions, he argues, help to provide a better account of the "inner imaginative processes" that the *Comedy* represents, even if they only take us part of the way to understanding them.

The bulk of the book is made up of discussions of three individual cantos, *Inferno* XXX, *Purgatorio* XXXI and *Paradiso* X. In their different ways all three discussions take up the argument of the introductory chapter, though not on the whole systematically. The first, on the giants at the bottom of Dante's Hell, fo-

cuses on their dramatic properties, which Dronke characterizes as a kind of awesome comedy ("furchtbare Komik"), rather than on their presumed allegorical significance; but the chapter also deals with a variety of other topics in the canto. The second, and probably the most controversial for the majority of readers, argues against the usual reading of the "phantasmagoria" in the Earthly Paradise, as an allegory of the poet's views on Church and Empire: instead Dronke's thesis is that the various figures which appear to Dante are a "hidden comparison", as conceived by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, representing the inner, personal experience of the poet in addition to his political ideas. The third, on Dante's arrival in the circle of the Sun, concentrates on his "central thought" in the canto, the "unity of knowledge and love", and, among other things, on the imagery that is used to express this thought.

All three of these chapters seem to have originated as contributions to the *lectura* *Dantis* genre, and as such they are outstanding; few critics or scholars could equal Dronke's combination of wide-ranging learning, originality and sense for poetic effect. Taken as a whole, the book is also an exciting and authoritative invitation to rethink the interpretation of the *Comedy* in its entirety, with a view to arriving at a new and better account of its poetic properties. However, the three central

chapters, as Dronke himself says, are only "fragments of what would be ideally a more extended enquiry", and their argument is not wholly satisfying, especially, perhaps, to those who agree strongly with his criticism of allegorical interpretation.

The problem is that the alternative approach he puts forward may not seem that much of an improvement; not, at least, in the chapter which illustrates it most extensively, on *Purgatorio* XXXI. Dronke's reinterpretation of Dante's "phantasmagoria" is fascinatingly ingenious, but it is open to the same objections as the sort of allegorical interpretation he criticizes: that it is a highly speculative addition to the text's content, and that the meaning it postulates is not of a very significant kind. For the added content he finds in Dante's images—the tree, the eagle, the griffin, the chariot and the monster—amounts to little more than a complicated restatement, in metaphorical or figurative terms, of emotions in Dante the character that are expressed quite clearly enough at the literal level of the text: his shame over his past misdeeds and waste of his poetic talents, his desire to ascend heavenwards, his sense of renewal. While this multiplication of hidden meanings adds a degree of human interest to the episode, there are, surely, more complex and subtle ways of doing justice to the *Comedy's* poetic properties.

## Weight worn lightly

A. J. Minnis

W. T. H. JACKSON  
The Challenge of the Medieval Text: Studies in genre and interpretation  
Edited by Joan M. Ferrante and Robert W. Heining  
246pp. Columbia University Press. \$34.  
0221 92871  
Edited and completed by Douglas Gray  
196pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
0198122144

*Redde quod debes*: render what you owe. Langland's injunction is clearly apposite to these books. Indeed, Douglas Gray, who has edited and completed the late J. A. W. Bennett's contribution to the Oxford History of English Literature, quotes it in his generous preface. J. M. Ferrante and R. W. Heining originally planned their collection of essays by W. T. H. Jackson to mark his retirement; his death in May 1983 transformed it into a memorial volume. In both books substantial debts have been repaid, with interest.

Jackson's strengths as a teacher and scholar, say his editors, lay in the breadth of his interests and "the range of his perspectives, in his willingness to confront each work on its terms, rather than on his". Such gifts are manifested by these writings on a wide range of topics from medieval German, French and Latin literature. Jackson wears his learning lightly to produce weighty criticism, which eschews excessively intellectual or moralistic approaches and instead offers its own kind of sophistication, a kind which is particularly responsive to literary posturing, playfulness and discrepancy. Sometimes one wants to question him further (as when he avoids the fact that Andreas Capellanus does on occasion seem in condone adultery), sometimes a pronouncement or distinction fails to satisfy (for instance, his contrast between "allegory" and "allegorizing") and sometimes one sees the ghosts of things not dreamed of in his philosophy. But the elegance and ease of Jackson's comparative analysis are most impressive. One comes away from the book thinking that being taught by him would have been delightful.

Bennett's book manages to be at once thoroughly comprehensive and highly personal. Professor Gray has indeed left his forbear's "opinions (and his prejudices) untouched", as he sought to do. As a guide to Middle English literature, Bennett is genial, witty, highly opinionated, and on occasion frankly puzzled. His critical observations sometimes attain the

quite predictably, excellent. Gower is presented as a poet of understatement and muted humour who goes out of his way to avoid surprise or shock. Though the "Medieval Ovid" was a profound influence on *Confessio Amantis*, its author's watchword is peace rather than passion—hence Bennett's wonderful characterization of Gower as "the poet of early dawn and nights steeped in silence". In *Piers Plowman*, Bennett, there is "none of the flood tides of the Reformation". For him, Langland is "the most Catholic of poets", who gives "orthodoxy a dynamic power, restating it in human terms". In sharp contrast, "Wyclif's orthodoxy weakened"—and Bennett cannot forgive him for that: "In his opinionated and humourless argumentativeness, as well as in more fundamental ways, Wyclif anticipates the operations of what has come to be called the Nonconformist conscience." Similarly, the Lollards are described as intemperate railers who, among other failures, struggled with no great success to adapt Latin scholastic language to vernacular use.

But to single out Wyclif and the Lollards for special condemnation is surely inappropriate. In the first instance, one should recall the insights regularly exchanged by the participants in theological controversies (modest poverty being a good example) which predate Wyclif, or indeed the abusive language employed by

Wyclif's opponents. Secondly, the Lollards were not alone in struggling to translate scholastic language into the vernacular. Evidence of such verbal wrestling is also afforded by Chaucer's Boethius, Usk's *Testament of Love*, Trevisa's *Dialogus*, and (to move into the fifteenth century, admittedly beyond Bennett's brief) *Dives et Pauper* or Bishop Pecock's single-handed attempt to create an English philosophical and theological corpus which moreover, at one point Bennett seems to be accusing Wyclif of being too abstruse as a thinker, which is rather like accusing a racing driver of going too fast; super-subtlety was the stock-in-trade of fourteenth-century schoolmen. In sum, it would seem that Wyclif and his followers were not been given their due.

Less predictable, perhaps, but none the less impressive for that, is Bennett's gift for cogent summarizing of medieval narratives. Romances like *Sir Amadace*, *Libeaus Desconus* and *The Avowing of Arthur* come across as the nipping (and sometimes ridiculous) yares that they are. The account of *The Bruce* is a high point. "Barbour had a superb story to tell," affirms Bennett, and his enthusiasm is infectious. "We are put alongside the characters throughout, in their discomforts and perils as well as their feats of arms." We certainly are, in Bennett's lively paraphrase. On occasion, however, his gifts as a raconteur carry him away, as in the statement that "Malory early

reached print because Caxton was looking for a big fat book to show what his new press could do." That is to make history into Romance rather than to write the history of Romance.

In what sense, indeed, can this book be called a "history"? There is little attempt to relate the literary works to the social, intellectual and cultural contexts which (some would say) define their significance. Moreover, the choice of genre as the main principle of organization—which generally works very well—infinitely riches being revealed in a little room—seems to have entailed some lack of attention to such contextualizing matters as local issues and conditions, dialect, and manuscript provenance. Little is known of the author or context of *The Owl* and the *Nightingale*, as Bennett says, but where such information is available more use might well have been made of it. One wonders why, for instance, no account was taken of Eric Dobson's remarkable detective work on the origins of *Ancrene Wisse*. But the strengths of this survey of Middle English texts—for such it is—are many and various. I know of no better book to put into the hands of anyone wishing to be introduced to the rich array of fourteenth-century English literature (Chaucer excepted). It will deservedly be a standard work for many years to come, and should weather well, thanks to the judicious way in which it has been written and compiled. All lovers of the subject owe Professors Bennett and Gray a considerable debt.

## Deep in the Danish past

Bridget Morris

Saagen om Bjørnulf  
Translated by Andreas Haarder  
166pp. Copenhagen: G.E.C. Gad  
8712349518

If J. R. R. Tolkien has been the guide of English responses to *Beowulf*, N. F. S. Grundtvig has done the same for Danish responses. It was Grundtvig—poet, theologian, educationalist, antiquarian and, it can be said, shaper of present-day Denmark—who produced the first modern translation of the Anglo-Saxon poem in 1820, and who first drew attention to its great artistry and poetic merit, and identified many of the lines of interpretation which were to be taken up by later critics. Since Grundtvig's translation, four further translations into Danish have appeared, to which Andreas Haarder's is a welcome addition.

Haarder's name became known to English readers with the publication, in 1973, of *Beowulf: the appeal of a poem* in which he

disengaged himself from several decades of Beowulf scholarship and offered an ingenious and fresh appreciation of the work. He believes that an understanding of myths and legends concerning Scandinavia's past lies deep in the Danish consciousness, which helps explain why the Danish *Beowulf* tradition is unique in having a marked "folkic" appeal, making it easily accessible to readers at all levels. In his own characteristically informal yet informed style, he gives in the brief introduction to his translation an outline of the history of the poem; in which he brings Denmark's role to the fore, emphasizing the Danish characteristics of the poem's setting as well as the beginnings, in Denmark, of the modern revival in Beowulf scholarship. The translation (which does not include the Finnsburg Fragment) is throughout a faithful version of the original text. To help his readers through the narrative, Haarder gives a short summary before each "song", which acts as a breathing space and reading point. He is conscious of the oral tradition which lies behind the poem, adopting for narrative measure an

four principal stresses and preserving the alliterative patterns, which lends the translation the rhythmic strength and sonority of the original. He is also sensitive to *Beowulf's* variations of style and tempo. There are consistently literal renderings of the compounds and kennings, the more unwieldy and obscure of which may baffle the general reader, even if they do give a flavour of the original poem. No translation can ever capture the vocabulary and the full range of registers of the Anglo-Saxon masterpiece, but Haarder works well to turn its richness into a diction which is neither colloquial nor archaic.

The word-for-word translation, however, is not undertaken at the expense of the poetry. With Grundtvig, Haarder views the poem as a living entity which transcends national and temporal barriers. He understands Grundtvig's assertion that the work of art must be melted down by its translator before it can be fashioned anew. Unlike Grundtvig, Haarder does not repress the poem into a completely new mould, but remains faithful to it both in letter and in spirit.

## Metaphor and metamorphosis

Stephen Bann

CLAUDE GANDELMAN  
Le Regard dans le Texte: Image et écriture du  
Quattrocento au XXe siècle  
199pp. Paris: Klincksieck.  
286563 1311  
PENNY FLORENCE  
Mallarmé, Manet and Redon: Visual and aural  
signs and the generation of meaning  
167pp. Cambridge University Press. £27.50.  
0521 305705

Over the past few years the barrier between visual and verbal forms of communication has come to seem less of a stumbling-block than hitherto. Indeed it has come to appear a challenge and an opportunity. The development of interdisciplinary practices in the Humanities, and the diffusion of semiotic and semiological modes of analysis, have both succeeded in drawing attention to the many different areas where visual and verbal signs work in conjunction. Both of these studies are extremely valuable in demonstrating that such an approach need not be confined to marginal areas and peripheral problems. If the geography of the disciplines depends on well-established lines of demarcation, it has to accommodate from time to time the emergence of a new site, from

which the old issues look refreshingly novel.

Claude Gandelman proves this point in a series of virtuoso essays which range broadly over the culture of East and West, from ancient Egypt to the present day. Each of his investigations is meticulously carried out, with a sure but unobtrusive use of semiotic method and an impressive mastery of the very diverse source materials. Appropriately enough, the conduct of the argument gains a great deal from the clever use of illustrations and in particular from the apposite line-drawings and diagrams. These enable us to trace without undue effort such themes as the identification of sight and touch in one symbol, from the hieroglyph to the experimental data of "speed reading", and the pictorial gesture of witness (or "ostension") from the Renaissance painting to the modern recruiting poster ("I Want You for US Army"). Ingenious as these cross-cultural investigations undoubtedly are, they are also highly illuminating in the way that they suggest an alternative genealogy for some of the accepted features of contemporary culture. One of Gandelman's most fascinating essays deals with the "Jansenist" painting of Philippe de Champaigne, in which Hebrew texts from the Old Testament advocating a prohibition on images are incorporated in New Testament scenes which show Christ's encounters with the Jews. The final reference to Kandinsky, also involved in "de-iconization" for spiritual

reasons, is not presented as a historical sequel to the Jansenist experience. But it does very effectively contextualize the conflict between figuration and non-figuration as a dynamic principle working in religious painting.

A simpler theme which Gandelman manages to make no less engrossing is the graphic art, or caricature, produced by two of the foremost writers of the Modern Movement, Kafka and Proust. Readers of Proust, in particular, must often have wondered why the visual images chosen to accompany his text, whether by contemporary artists or by artists of the *belle époque*, seem so singularly inappropriate. These remarkable and little-known drawings by Proust himself, which are kept with his manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, provide a part of the answer. For Proust does not sketch, or invent, a likeness. He translates into vivid, graphic form some of the dominant visual metaphors through which his "characters" are constructed: the myth that the Guermantes had as their ancestor a legendary swan becomes the pretext for a hybrid of bird and aristocrat that would not have looked out of place among the drawings of Edward Lear, while the Baron de Charlus is characterized by a precise visual equivalent to that "triangle convulsif et frappant" which the narrator sees in his face. Most of Gandelman's identifications are avowedly conjectural. But the point that Proust's visual imagination worked hand in hand with his use of metaphor and metamorphosis is convincingly made.

Some of the best sections of Penny Florence's *Mallarmé, Manet and Redon* are concerned with a similar elucidation of the visual palimpsests of a late nineteenth-century artist: in this case, the bizarre series of images and texts produced by Odilon Redon under the title *Les Origines*. It is worth noting that Gandelman sees a Cubist influence in Proust's decidedly unconventional style of draughtsmanship, while Florence legitimately reads back into Redon's complex images the superimpositions and shifts in perspective that Cub-

ism was later to bring about in less discreet a fashion. Yet Florence's study is otherwise very different in emphasis from Gandelman's wide-ranging enquiry. It concentrates on Mallarmé, as poet and critic of contemporary painting, in relation to the visual practices of both Redon and Manet. As an essay in method, it is at once more ambitious and more tentative. It uses the keyboard of semiotics to set up a whole series of different resonances—historical, cultural and ideological—but too many of these remain on the level of suggestion, rather than of demonstration.

The reader should in fact be warned that the first substantial chapter, entitled "A new problematic of the imaginary", is the least satisfactory of all. It begins with a series of lengthy texts on painting by Mallarmé, valuable in themselves but taxing to the reader because of the tiny print. Possibly because it reflects the long gestation of the book, it makes relatively little of these important texts, concentrating instead on a highly allusive treatment of the different critical attitudes to Mallarmé over recent years.

After this *selva oscura*, the book gets much better. With more clearly defined materials in view, the author is able to narrow and intensify her analysis, making excellent use of semiotic concepts like "ostension" to draw connections between the paintings of Manet and Whistler, and the poems of Mallarmé: Freud's brief but suggestive paper on "A mythological parallel to a visual obsession" is employed to introduce a really penetrating investigation of the images of Redon, once again in close conjunction with the reading of Mallarmé. In writing about "Un Coup de Dés", she returns to more well-trodden ground. But the idea of considering this elusive work in conjunction with Redon's unpublished illustrations pays off handsomely. Of the final short chapter, on "Gender-in-signification", it is hard to say as much. The question of the feminine in Mallarmé's work floats tantalizingly—perhaps a promise of "un livre futur?"

insightful... and timely.

## Intuitions and subversions

Virgil Nemoianu

EUGENE IONESCO  
Non  
Edited and translated by Marie-France  
Ionesco  
308pp. Paris: Gallimard. 120fr.  
2 07 076753

Those who have marvelled at Ionesco's radical experimentalism may not realize that his mature work was actually a toning-down of the much more ferocious radicalism of his youth. At twenty-two he was still in Bucharest. He had read widely, but unsystematically. His intuitions and emotions were surprisingly deep, varied and precise for such a young man, and he had an incredible self-confidence and capacity for challenging whatever was accepted. His first book was called simply "No" and more than half of it is a calm and relentless demolition of some of Romania's greatest living writers. These (Arghezi, Bruc, Camil Petrescu) were not venerable traditionalists, but the shining lights of the Modernist wave, often resented for their novelty. Yet in 1934 Ionesco saw in their works the outlines of an emergent canon, and immediately set about subverting it. In the book he is paradoxical, violent and unjust, but also brilliant and amusing, and above all right on the broader issues, even when he is being prejudiced on specific ones.

To repair some of these local injustices the present French translation is accompanied by two critical essays (by Eugène Simion and Iliea Gregor), by the translator's notes and by a generous introductory disclaimer from Ionesco himself. Here he makes the melancholy observation that the fifty years that have elapsed have turned a text that was intended as a critique of the (normal) vicissitudes of any literary commonwealth into a celebration of a society brimming with freedom, variety, and creative ferment. This is only to some extent an effect of nostalgia, and much more a result of the dreary and stupefying dictatorship that has kept hold of Romania over the past four decades.

The interest of the book is not primarily historical, however; but to be found in its tragicomic musings about literature and life. Ionesco first reveals himself as a critical relativist. Even as he is lambasting the poetry of Arghezi, he remarks that he might well decide one day to argue the opposite case. Whenever Ionesco is in a polemic, he suggests, an inner voice tells me that the other side is right. He illustrates this ambivalence very spiritedly by taking the first novel of his friend, the future dictator of religion, Mircea Eliade, and writ-

ing two directly opposite reviews of it, one highly laudatory, the other remorselessly panning. Ultimately aesthetic value itself is cast into doubt—a shocking heresy in a culture like that of Romania, in which the beautiful had traditionally been thought of as higher than either the true or the good. That God must go the same way is inevitable. Ionesco writes: "If God exists, why write literature? And if He doesn't, why write literature?" He

ly, that if literature has no value, then it matters little whether God exists or not. What certainly did matter to this bright and sassy young man was the existence of death: the most moving and hilarious pages in the book are his "Intermezzo" on human identity and its cessation. Aptly enough the crowning essay argues for the relativity of death itself, but this, like whistling in a graveyard, seems to offer only a contrived optimism.

Along the way there are many delightful things in *Non*: portraits of literary and intellectual figures; a brilliant and instructive introduction to the ambitious literary beginner, in the ironic vein of an eighteenth-century essay; and many amusing displays of arrogance, as when Ionesco proclaims his competence at provoking scandals, or when he favourably compares his own talent, rhythm and verve as a writer to a rival's lack of coherence and plodding style. (Marie-France Ionesco's translation here catches very well the scapegoat charm and self-deprecatory posturing of sensibility and intelligence that had not yet found their vehicle.)

Not that *Non* is always self-indulgent and whimsical. Ionesco intimates more than once that he should be seen as a follower of the nineteenth-century *junimist* movement, which advocated continual self-criticism if Romania was to develop towards civilization, and which was to develop some political power in its day. His negative attitude towards established Romanian writers is usually based on references to the literary values of Proust or Valéry. Similarly, his approach to literature itself seems anarchical: in fact it displays an intuitive and effective use of what we would now call deconstruction or reception theory.

Finally, there are scattered but often memorable comments here on metaphysical atheism and on loneliness, on the impossibility of authentic self-expression in language, or the limits of morality, and in particular on the way in which the poetic, the absurd, and the imaginative coincide. "We emerge from nothingness not with a discourse, but with a scream or an astonished glance", the twenty-one-year-old Ionesco admonishes his readers. These are the views and perceptions that were to become the mainstay of his *oeuvre* and can be much better understood after reading *Non*.

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## The great oppositionist

Sunil Khilnani

RAGHAVAN IYER (Editor)  
The Moral and Political Writings of Mahatma Gandhi  
Volume Two: Truth and Non-Violence  
678pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £50.  
0198247559  
B. R. NANDA  
Gandhi and his Critics  
178pp. Delhi: Oxford University Press. £9.95.  
0195617223

Mahatma Gandhi is the great ornament on the scarred face of modern Indian politics. He represents everything that they are not. He believed that independent India might be a non-violent, moral and tolerant community, yet four decades after partition and independence the Indian polity is marked by violence, corruption and chauvinism. Gandhi hoped to moralize politics, but political government in India today can scarcely claim moral authority — what legitimacy it possesses derives from a sentimental attachment to the past combined with a nervous anxiety about the future. Does Gandhi hold more than ceremonial value for India today?

National politics there since independence have been constituted and dominated by two crucial elements: the languages of liberalism (inherited from the colonial past) and socialism (inspired by the Soviet model). Gandhi refused both of these languages, which he associated with the westernized, middle-class intelligentsia and the Brahminic elites, and instead adopted a mode of thought and action which he hoped would overturn both these hegemonies. Ashis Nandy, in his remarkable studies on the psychology of colonialism, has shown how many of the leaders of nationalist and social reform movements in modern India were deeply embarrassed by what they considered backward, incoherent and unmanly components of their cultures. Some — Ram Mohan Roy, metaphysicians (along the lines of Christian theology); others — Sardar Patel, Nehru — simply borrowed political models from elsewhere.

Gandhi suffered no such embarrassment: on the contrary, he saw the strength and virtue of Indian culture as founded precisely on its weak and feminine qualities. His great innovation was to abandon the notion of an intellectual vanguard which would lead India to freedom, and to appeal directly to the non-Brahminic, illiterate and peasant cultures. Within a tradition which viewed it as the domain of high culture, Gandhi demystified politics and made it public, thus providing an arena in which nationalist and social reform movements could for the first time fuse together.

The peculiar character of his moral and political thought is incomprehensible unless we recognize just what an aberration he was in the context of Indian politics. The central historical texts of Indian statecraft, the *Mahabharata* and the *Arthashastra*, hardly propose a self-sacrificing or spiritual view of politics; indeed, the *Arthashastra* encourages a decidedly Machiavellian mode of conduct. "Politics are not for *sadhus* [holy men]," Tilak advised Gandhi in 1918, but Gandhi insisted on seeing them as an extension of personal morality. Morality in turn was secured by disciplining the individual will, primarily through vows of self-denial. Hence the importance he attached to the political fast: it instanced most clearly how mastery of individual appetite could translate into political action. Against the tradition, and against politicians like Tilak, Gandhi was shrewd enough to realize that a strict personal morality actually made credible rather than hindered political negotiation and compromise. In this sense, he was perhaps more a tactician than a political thinker, a master of oppositional politics; it is difficult, after all, to imagine a Gandhian politics of government. Even in the final decade of his life, he still acknowledged that "I cannot say in advance what the government based wholly on non-violence will be like".

Despite a deceptively pellucid style, Gandhi is an extremely complex thinker to assess. His *Collected Works*, published by the Government of India, is an accessible and coherent record of his essential writings. Iyer has undertaken the daunting task of combing through these

ninety volumes, to produce a three-volume edition of the "essential writings". The volume under review collects together speeches, articles and correspondence, and is intended to present the core of Gandhi's moral thought, his "creed" of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) and *Satya* (truth). It is a pity that Iyer has relied on the official translations and versions of the *Collected Works* (almost half of the material in this collection first appeared in Gujarati or Hindi), since I suspect that new translations might reveal emphases of Gandhi's thought and reasoning which are there obscured. Nevertheless, Iyer's edition is bound to become an indispensable reference guide.

The chief fault of the volume is Iyer's introduction, which lacks any sense of the historical and intellectual context of Gandhi's thought, preferring instead to indulge in portentous mysticism. Gandhi was an eclectic and idiosyncratic thinker, sensitive to his audience and to the power of rhetorical persuasion. There is a mischievous quality to his thought, and he often chose to present himself as a Fool, a jester who used mockery and pointed wit for subversive ends. Iyer's reverential attitude occludes the subtler side of Gandhi's thought, and produces such unhelpful observations as that "The political strength which *Ahimsa* can summon is greater and profounder than the impact of violence precisely because *Ahimsa* is consubstantial with the immortal soul."

Gandhi invited and enjoyed discussion of his thoughts and actions, and since his death he has been the subject of divergent and often critical interpretations. A systematic study of these would be very welcome. B. R. Nanda's book promises to provide one, but unfortunately what results is more like hagiography. Nanda is a historian and a biographer of Gandhi, and the pieces collected together in this slim volume are knowledgeable and competently written. However, they have an occasional air about them and rely too often on suggestion rather than sustained argument. One of the book's intentions is to demonstrate Gandhi's "relevance" to modern India, but the determined attention to the realities and possibilities of modern Indian politics just might

## Magnanimous magnate

T. Raychaudhuri

ALAN ROSS  
The Emisary: G. D. Birla, Gandhi and Independence  
240pp. Collins Harvill. £14.  
000272067

The emissary of the title is the Indian industrial and commercial magnate, Ghanashyamdas Birla, a personal friend of Mahatma Gandhi and a major source of funds for the Indian National Congress during its years of confrontation with the Raj. This unusual person, who died at the age of eighty-nine in 1983, was on very friendly terms with successive British Vicereroys and Secretaries of State. He also had the good fortune, probably unique in the annals of Anglo-Indian relations, to discuss with Winston Churchill the prospects for the constitutional progress in India which would eventually lead to independence. Churchill, then the leader of the die-hurds, was exceptionally pleasant, expressed his wish to meet the naked fakir, "wore a workman's apron which he did not change at lunch" and politely suggested that Indians might play "God Save The King" together with their own national anthem. The object of this particular exercise, as of other similar efforts Birla made to meet the leading personalities in British public life, was to establish personal contact which, in his opinion, was the ultimate panacea for all the ills which encumbered Indo-British relations. He never lost this touching faith, though his efforts to interpret Bapu to the British and vice versa appear to have been terribly frustrating.

His exercise in what Alan Ross has chosen to call "alternative" history, based for the most part on the published volumes of the Birla-Gandhi correspondence, the transfer-of-power documents and a number of well-known monographs, does not add a great deal to our knowledge of the history of the period by way of new insights or new analyses. But it does add a new dimension to our insight into the personality of Gandhi and the men and events of his time precisely because Mr. Ross has none of the bang-ups of the professional historian dealing with the period. He is not identifiably pro or anti-colonial and does not subscribe to any particular interpretation of nationalism. His treatment of Gandhi never glosses over the idiosyncrasies, ambiguities and even duplicities of that leader's political style. At the same time Ross almost appears to agree with Gandhi's rejoinder to Samuel Hoare's expression of pride in England's work in India: "You may be proud, although there is no reason to be proud of anything, but you should also be ashamed of the atrocities and injustice your race has imposed on the Indian people." Gandhi asked Hoare to ponder why he, a "whole-hearted and ardent" admirer of the Raj, had turned against it. Ross displays an intuitive understanding of the frustration and anger which partly explain the transformation — Gandhi's own as well as that of politicized Indians.

In reply to a journalist, Gandhi stated that the Congress "unfortunately" depended on financial support from industrialists. The connection, to the opinion of some, was a source of unwholesome influence. Ross argues, quite convincingly, that there was no "deal" between Gandhi and Birla. The latter's conversion to nationalism, which on one occasion necessitated his going underground for some months, predated his first encounter with Gandhi. His eagerness for a settlement with the British never diminished his commitment to the nationalist cause. But nationalism, unmistakably, was for him the ideology of his class. Capitalists, he wrote to Tata, could not fight communism or subversive trade unions in India on their own; one had to work for a national government to achieve those ends. His social ideology appears to have derived from his two identities — the philanthropic *baniya* and the forward-looking capitalist. He not only endowed educational institutions but, having made in his own life the transition from speculative trade to industrial enterprise, worked for the industrialization of India — and not merely with an eye on profits. In India's mixed economy, G. D. Birla was a power for the good.

## Exaggerated reports

Barry Coward

J. C. DAVIS  
Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians  
208pp. Cambridge University Press. £22.50.  
0521262437

"There was no Ranter movement, no Ranter sect, no Ranter theology", asserts J. C. Davis, brushing dramatically aside the work of the historians, such as Barry Reay and J. F. McGregor, who have built on the conclusions of A. L. Morton's *The World of the Ranters: Religious radicalism in the English Revolution* (1970) to show to everyone's satisfaction (until now) that the Ranters not only existed but were an important part of a radical religious wave in the early 1650s that sought to overthrow established values and "respectable" beliefs. Professor Davis disagrees with these historians, but his prime targets are the pamphleteers and gutter journalists of the 1650s whose accounts are one of the main sources of evidence for Ranter activities, and Christopher Hill, whose *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical ideas during the English Revolution* (1975) has been mainly responsible for the widespread acceptance of the importance of the Ranters. According to Davis, seventeenth-century writers and twentieth-century historians have created, for different reasons, a myth — the Ranter movement — that had no basis in reality.

How valid are the arguments he develops to substantiate this radical claim? He is certainly right to point out that some of the sources used to re-create the world of the Ranters tell us more about contemporary perceptions than about what actually happened in the 1650s. In the best parts of the book (Chapters Four and

Five) Davis examines accounts of the Ranters by sensational journalists in the 1650s (extracts are printed in a lengthy appendix) and argues convincingly that much of what they say is a reflection of contemporary fears and anxieties. In the wake of the execution of the King, the abolition of the House of Lords and the establishment of a republic in 1649, many people believed that the traditional social order was also on the point of disintegration. In this volatile climate rumours fuelled by fear took on lives of their own. What is more, there were people willing to exploit these fears for their own advantage, like the leaders of religious sects who used the image of a group of subversive religious extremists to frighten their followers into conformity.

Davis shows clearly that contemporaries exaggerated the Ranter phenomenon; he is also on strong ground when he argues that it is

necessary to read the writings of the Ranters objectively and with a proper regard for the historical context in which they were written. Thus, in discussing "the Ranter core" — the works of Jacob Bauthumley, Abiezer Coppe and Lawrence Clarkson, and the anonymous *A Justification of the Mad Crew* — he brings out the differences between them. What is especially interesting is that the most famous piece of evidence, Clarkson's autobiography, *The Lost Sheep Found*, was written at a time (the later 1650s) when Clarkson was a contender for the leadership of the Muggletonians and so had strong reasons to want to blacken the reputations of those religious groups with which he had associated nearly ten years previously.

It is possible, therefore, to go a certain way along the revisionist road with Davis. The Ranters were not as influential or popular as some have made them out to be. That much fits with

the growing evidence of popular conservatism and Anglicanism in the mid-seventeenth century. Nor were they a group of people who agreed with each other in every particular. Indeed, few have argued that this was the case. As Hill himself wrote, "there was no recognised leader or theoretician of the Ranters, and it is extremely doubtful whether there was ever a Ranter organisation". But were the Ranters merely an invention of contemporaries and historians? When Bauthumley, Coppe and Clarkson argued that sin did not exist, or at least had no moral force, were they simply arguing for "a reformation of behaviour" by every individual, i.e. "doctrinal" antinomianism, and not "the liberation of practical antinomianism"? That these writers advocated individual spiritual revival is not in doubt. But much of what they wrote suggests that they felt that this could not be achieved without bringing about a basic change in society. It is difficult to accept Davis's conclusion that when Clarkson wrote the following he was advocating "a reformation of behaviour only":

Who are the oppressors but the Nobility and Gentry; and who are the oppressed, if not the Yeoman, the Farmer, the Tradesman and the Labourer? Then consider, have you not chosen oppressors to redeem you from oppression? . . . your slavery is their liberty, your poverty is their prosperity; yea, in brief, your honouring of them, dishonoureth the community . . . unless those that are lorded by you.

"The Ranters" is a label that can be used to describe, not a clearly defined sect in the way that some contemporaries used it, but a small number of people whose antinomian beliefs were the antithesis of conventional moral ideas, which led them to attack many of the assumptions on which English society in the seventeenth century was based. J. C. Davis has written a lively and exciting book, but in his determination to attack Christopher Hill he has carried revisionism too far.



A detail from a late seventeenth-century political broadsheet, in which the Whigs are portrayed as led by the rebellious Puritans of the 1640s and 50s; it is taken from Stuart England, edited by Blair Worden (272pp. Phaidon. £25. 071482391 0).

## Shifts in a shire

Claire Cross

DIARMAID MACCULLOCH  
Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and religion in an English county 1500-1600  
454pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £35.  
0198229143

Partly through demographic accident, partly through the withdrawal of royal favour, Suffolk in the course of the sixteenth century lost its great magnates, the Earl of Oxford, the Duke of Suffolk and the Duke of Norfolk, to emerge well before the death of Elizabeth as a county dominated by substantial country gentlemen. In this minutely documented yet constantly absorbing study Diarmaid MacCulloch both describes and analyses this transformation.

In some respects the change in the nature of the county's government is the easiest to explain. The leading gentlemen automatically filled the power vacuum left by the disappearance

of the De Veres, Brandons and Howards, to rule Suffolk in the name of the Crown. The book, however, contains much more than a detailed examination of the administration of the county gentry. Local gentlemen chose to build their houses in sheltered inland valleys, with the result that even by 1600 nearly two-thirds of the Suffolk parishes did not possess a resident gentry family; consequently, in the towns clothiers, merchants and tradesmen, and the countryside yeomen and husbandmen, and to an extent labourers in both environments, stood a chance of having their aims fulfilled. Two East Anglian revolts actually reversed governmental policy and, in one case, overthrew the government itself. In response to the riots of Lavenham clothworkers, abetted by yeomen from the surrounding district, Wolsey dropped the Amicable Grant of 1525. Northumberland in 1549 succeeded in crushing the Bury and Ipswich camps formed during Kett's rebellion, but the resentment this caused played no small part in rallying the commons as well as the gentry to Princess Mary four years

later. Rising in Suffolk three months before the 1569 Rebellion of the Earls, litigation superseded direct action, but some popular pressure was still being exerted during parliamentary elections at the century's close.

Perhaps more decisive than either the move from noble to gentry leadership or the sublimation of popular revolts was the change in the religious character of Suffolk. From being a county in which the inhabitants delighted in the physical representation of the old religion, rebuilding and ornamenting their magnificent parish churches until within months of the Henrician Reformation, parts of Suffolk withdrew the government itself. In response to the riots of Lavenham clothworkers, abetted by yeomen from the surrounding district, Wolsey dropped the Amicable Grant of 1525. Northumberland in 1549 succeeded in crushing the Bury and Ipswich camps formed during Kett's rebellion, but the resentment this caused played no small part in rallying the commons as well as the gentry to Princess Mary four years

subsequent martyrdom. Instead, the new merchants fostered contacts with Continental Protestantism, Cranmer encouraged the creation of a Protestant enclave at Hadleigh, while towards the end of the reign, in the persons of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk, Lord Wentworth and Sir William Waldegrave, the county received the attention of several important Protestant patrons. This early planting of Protestantism produced in certain areas a considerable lay resistance to Mary's Catholic restoration and a positive welcome to the re-institution of Protestantism by Elizabeth.

Although his monograph covers a longer period Dr MacCulloch has followed the pattern of A. Hassell Smith's *County and Court: Government and politics in Norfolk 1558-1603*; this means that his appendices, which include charts of the administrative careers of Suffolk justices, can be directly related to the tables in the former book. East Anglia has been exceptionally fortunate in the achievements of its recent early modern historians.

## The pacific periphery

Martin Ceadel

MARTIN GREEN  
The Origins of Nonviolence: Tolstoy and Gandhi in their historical settings  
256pp. Pennsylvania State University Press. £27.50.  
0271004383

Most people believe that we must at times choose between going to war and submitting to injustice. One of the few ways of avoiding this painful choice has been offered by the theory of non-violence, which asserts, at least in its earliest and boldest form, that aggression and oppression can be prevented or neutralized without resort to violence. It claims, in other words, that peace with honour can always be assured and that pacifism is not only morally right but also politically effective.

It is not surprising, therefore, that, when first formulated by Mohandas K. Gandhi, who built on a foundation provided by the later writings of Lev Tolstoy, this theory rapidly gained an enthusiastic following. But Hitler was soon to demonstrate that it rested on an assumption of human reasonableness which could not be taken for granted; and the theory lost support during the Second World War. Those who have proclaimed the merits of non-violence since 1945 have generally espoused the theory in a much watered-down form. They have tended to imply only that it can work in domestic politics — for example, to help win civil rights for black Americans. And, on the few occasions when they have claimed it to be efficacious in international relations, too, they have lowered their expectations dramatically compared with the early 1930s. Sometimes they have given the impression that for a group of people simply to practise non-violence means the abolition of success, even if they

thereby fail to deter, drive out or win over the invader — hence the assertion by a leading theorist of non-violence that the Danes resisted Hitler "effectively" and "successfully". At other times their claim that non-violence "works" is no more than the claim that modern war is the greatest evil. Whatever the merits of this argument in the nuclear era, it does not claim that non-violence can avert injustice: it asserts instead that no policy can "work" to the sense of ensuring both justice and peace and that it is therefore rational to prefer the latter to the former on the grounds that it is the lesser evil. It is notable too that radicals in search of a practical alternative to orthodox defence policy have tended recently to give less attention to non-violence and more to arming a popular militia with the latest precision-guided munitions.

Martin Green seems to accept that non-violence is a theory which has fallen into disrepute but deserves reconsideration. He argues that, since we "all now stand at a crossroads" and almost "on the edge of a precipice", we "should at least take this last chance to pay tribute to the two men who could have saved us". Tolstoy and Gandhi, the inventors of "the modern version of nonviolence". Yet Green does not subscribe to the great-men view of history: indeed, according to his history, which makes the argument somewhat clearer than the book does, it was "world-historical forces, acting on the periphery of the modern world — in Russia in the nineteenth century and India in the twentieth century — which developed the idea of nonviolence in Tolstoy and then in Gandhi".

Green thus organizes his book so as to focus in each chapter upon a "convergence" between the situations in which Tolstoy (1828-1910) and Gandhi (1869-1948) successively found themselves, albeit at a remove of forty years, and which help to explain their respective

non-violence. He stresses that both were "citizens of great empires, but believers in radical religion"; that both were initially fascinated by their society's metropolitan culture, and, in so far as they were then reformers, accepted the need for modernization on a Western model; and that both came eventually to reject their society's caste system but also to have a greater respect than formerly for its particular "cultural-spiritual tradition". Green also compares each man not only to his professional equals, rivals and disciples, but also to the leading revolutionary of his time — Marx for Tolstoy and Lenin for Gandhi — on the grounds that they provide a "contrastive context" in which the distinctive features of non-violent revolutionism stand out more clearly.

How sympathetic the reader ultimately is, however, may depend on his or her disciplinary bias. Green is a professor of English (at Tufts University) and it is possible that those with a literary background will respond most favourably to such statements as: "a central focus of Tolstoy's interest in [1855-62] is what we can call 'consciousness', and St. Petersburg was a city of consciousness". Those of a social-scientific or historical bent will be disappointed at the book's failure either to develop its intriguing hints about the sociology of non-violence into a systematic account, or to locate Tolstoy's thinking in the wider context of anarchist thought. And those whose major interest is in the theory of non-violence itself will be disappointed by how little Green actually says about it, particularly the major differences between Tolstoy's and Gandhi's conceptions of it. All readers will be impressed, however, both by the author's intellectual self-confidence and by the information he has amassed about Tolstoy's and Gandhi's minor contemporary influences, even if the former makes the book notably idiosyncratic and the latter makes it more than a little indigestible in places.

## Party salad days

Mark Goldie

GEOFFREY HOLMES  
Politics, Religion and Society in England, 1679-1742  
367pp. Hambledon. £24.  
0907628753

Geoffrey Holmes is the doyen of historians of Augustan England, and it is a pleasure to see published, as *Politics, Religion and Society in England, 1679-1742*, a collection of twelve essays by him, written between 1962 and 1982. All his articles are massively researched, deeply considered and finely tuned, and in recent years he has contributed as much to social as to political history. Accordingly, Part One of this volume focuses on politics, and Part Two on social structure and religious ideology.

Holmes has called the years between 1679 and 1722 "the first age of party". They saw an

unprecedented seventeen general elections, a volatile electorate and intense confessional fissures. His inaugural lecture (1976) considered the "electorate and the national will", while his *Historical Association* pamphlet (1975) explored the role of religion. These were "destabilizing" elements in political life. In "The Achievement of Stability" (1981) he turned to the economic and social trends which provided "an underlying stability . . . which helped to confine the fury of party conflict".

Politics and social history converge in paradoxical ways in his examination of Gregory King's famous table of social structure drawn up in 1696. Holmes showed how shaky King's evidence was and how his judgment was influenced by his Tory thinking; his findings badly disrupted a cherished shibboleth. The remaining essays deal with more particular issues and personalities, especially during Sir Robert Harley's ascendancy. This fine collection will be indispensable for the teaching and understanding of Augustan England.

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